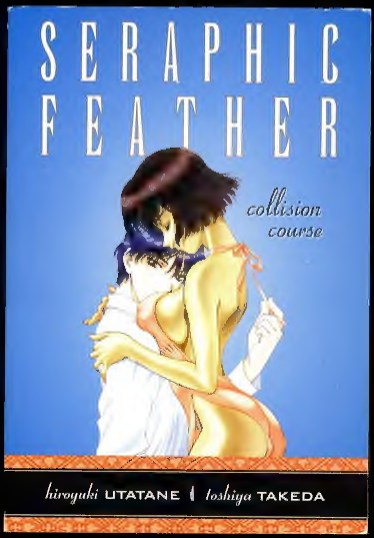
SERAPHIC
FEATHER
collision
course
hiroyuki UTATANE / toshiya TAKEDA

Graphic Novel/Manga/Science Fiction

A game of power, treachery, and violence plays out over possession of advanced alien technology discovered buried on the Moon. These "Emblem Seeds" can unleash incredible power, but only a few individuals are capable of wielding that power, and those who can are as valuable as the technology itself. Separatist corporate terrorists have hijacked a shuttle to Earth with the intent of kidnapping one such paranormal, Kei Heidemann, but U.N. agents, led by the beautiful and deadly Attim M-Zak are out to spoil their plot. If the agents fail, not only will Kei fall into enemy hands, but the crippled shuttle will collide with Earth's orbital elevator, cutting off the moon colonies and setting the stage for the Moon's independence . . . and potential war with Earth!

"I found myself getting pulled in more and more with each page."
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Collision Course

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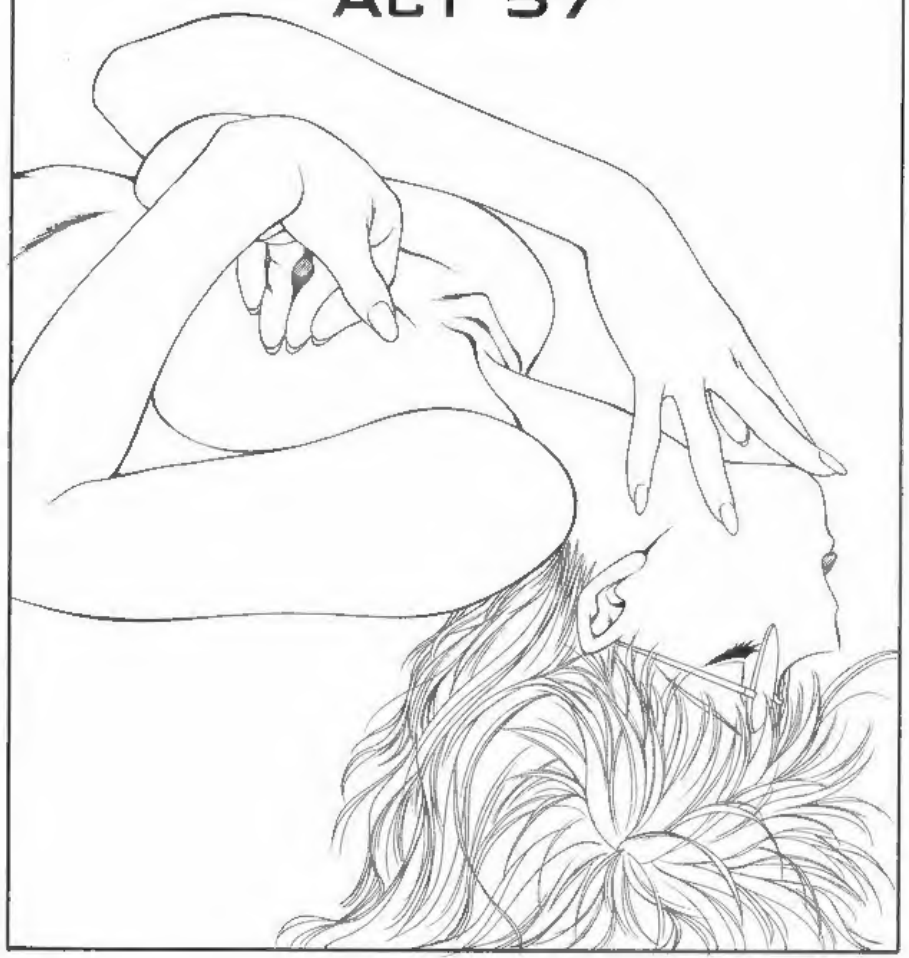
SERAPHIC FEATHER

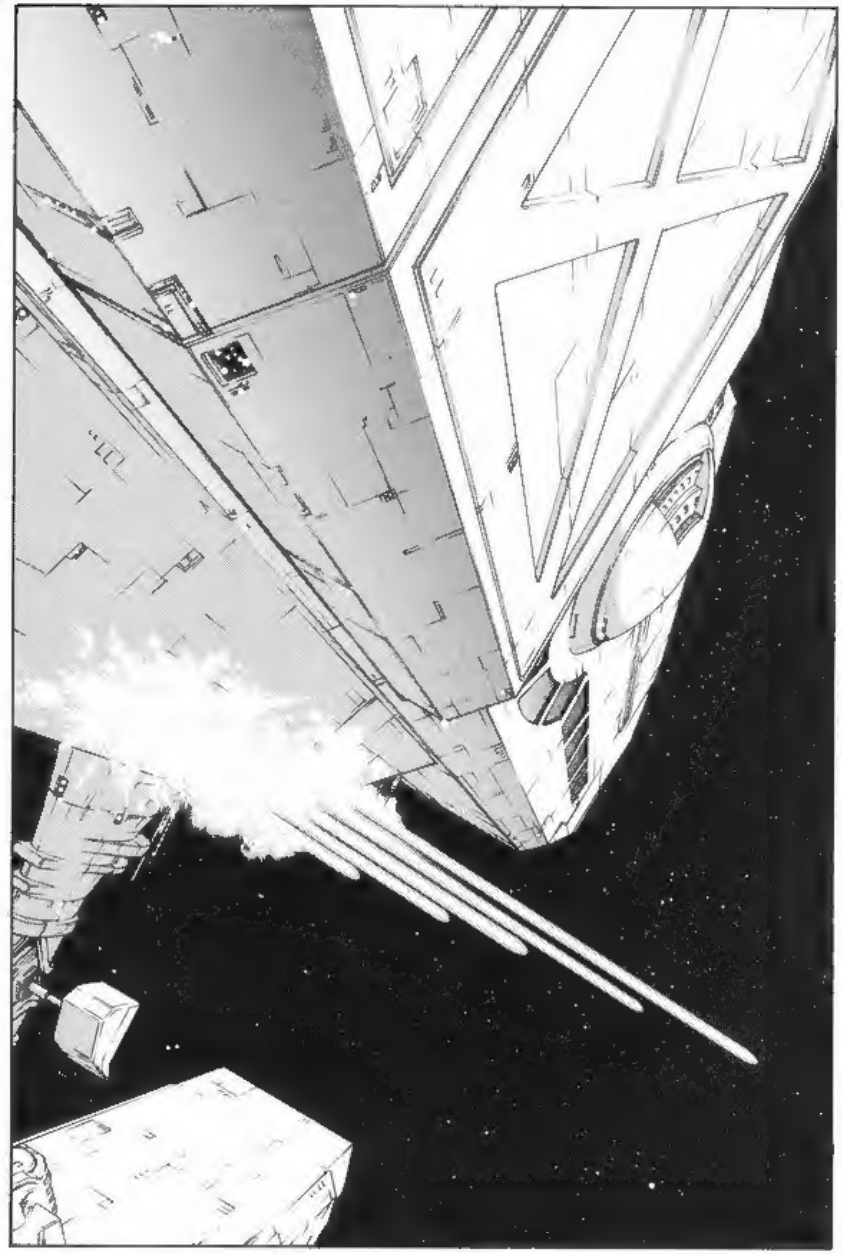
ACT 57



AH, JUST AS I THOUGHT... A *SIGNAL SCRAM-BLER.*

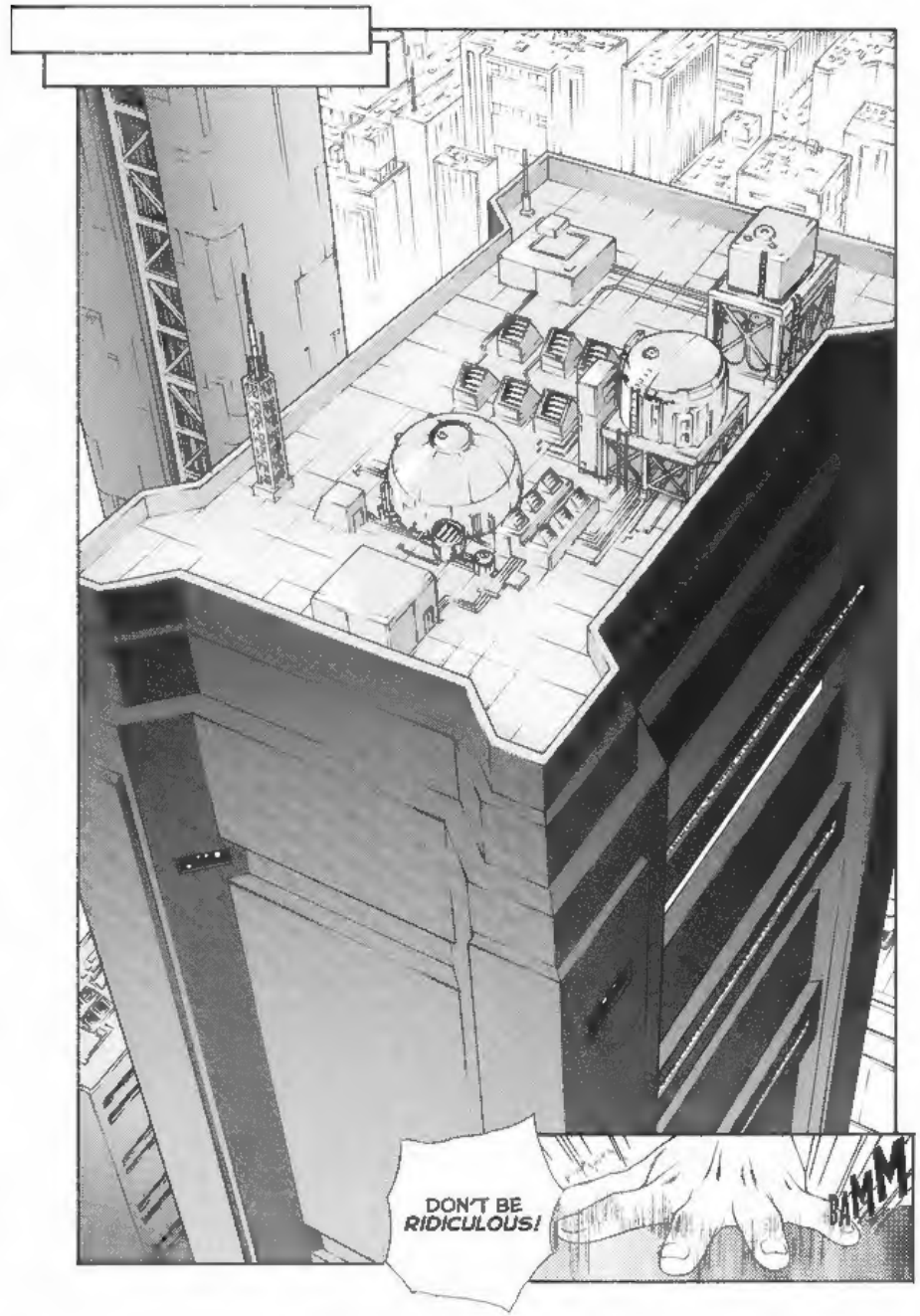
UM... EXCUSE ME, *ATTIM...* BUT...
PLEASE, TELL ME WHAT'S *HAPPENED...* WHERE IS MY *FATHER...?*
SHIMPP
WELL... HOW BEST TO *PUT* THIS...
YOU MIGHT CONSIDER PROFESSOR HEIDEMANN TO BE... *TEMPORARILY DETAINED.*

OH, NO... NO...!
BUT WHY ...?
AH, PARDON ME, BUT SECURITY'S HERE...
OH, ARE THEY? TOOK THEM LONG ENOUGH--
?!
RRMMBB
KREEK
KREEK
WHAT WAS THAT?
KLAK KLAK KLAK



AN EXPLOSION...?
NO... THAT WAS SOMETHING DIFFERENT...!
HEY... YOU KNOW WHAT THAT SOUNDS LIKE?

I THINK THE LIFEBOATS ARE LAUNCHING...!


DON'T BE RIDICULOUS!
BAMM

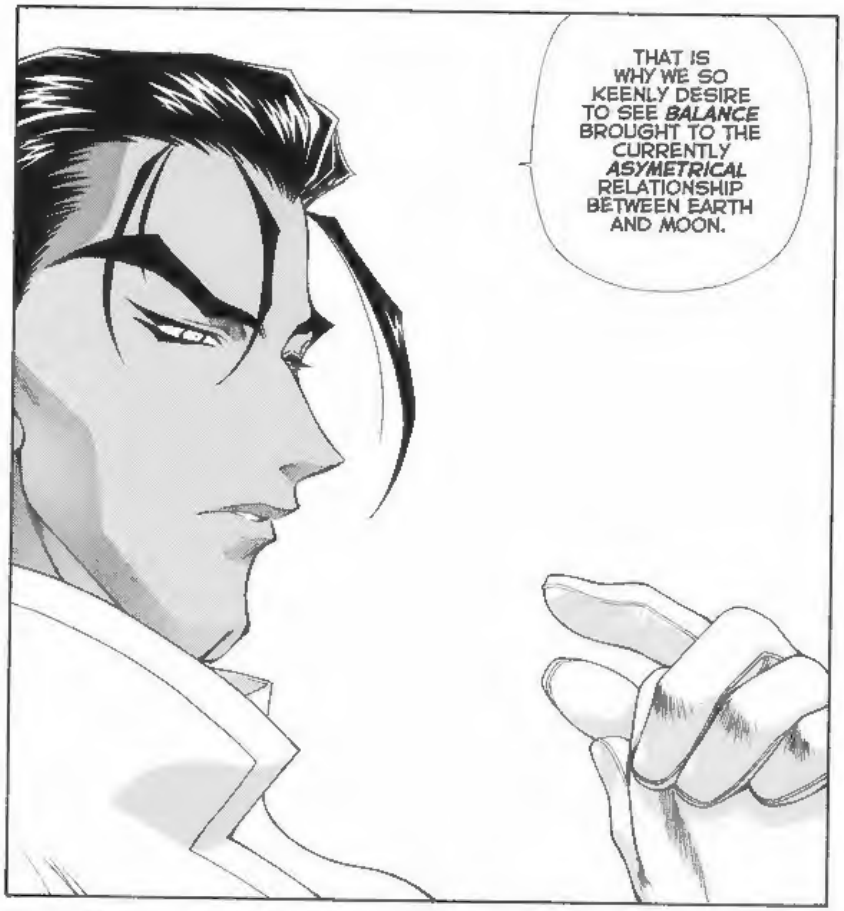
YOU WANT THE *U.N.* TO WITHDRAW FROM THE MOON *IMMEDIATELY?*
WE'RE ALREADY SCHEDULED TO GRANT YOU *INDEPENDENCE* WITHIN THREE YEARS *AS IS!*
WHY ELSE DO YOU THINK THAT MY STAFF AND I HAVE BEEN PURSUING THESE *ENDLESS NEGOTIATIONS?*
WHOOSH
"HFF"
"HAHH"

AH, *REPRE-SENTATIVE ERNEST...* WE, UH, WELL...
...LET ME *CLARIFY* THAT, OF COURSE, WE'RE NOT SUGGESTING THAT WE SHOULD *COMPLETELY* SEVER OUR TIES WITH THE U.N. AND THE EARTH... *HOWEVER...*
...HOWEVER, WE DO *EXPECT...*
...NO, WE ARE *DEMANDING* FULL ADMINISTRATIVE AUTONOMY...AND I'M AFRAID THAT OUR *POPULATION* WOULD ACCEPT NOTHING LESS.
AS YOU KNOW, LUNAR STAFF ARE ALREADY *ON STRIKE* AT EVERY EARTH-AFFILIATED COMPANY...AND WE'VE RECEIVED SEVERAL REPORTS OF *SABOTAGE!*
WE COULD BE FACING A *CITIZENS' REVOLT,* UNLESS...
THAT'S *EXACTLY* WHAT I MEAN! THIS IS *UTTER IDIOCY!*
BAMM

THE FIRST *LUNAR COLONY* WAS FOUNDED ONLY A DOZEN YEARS AGO! *MASS IMMIGRATION* HAS BEEN UNDERWAY FOR ONLY *SEVEN YEARS!* AND YOUR UNGRATEFUL MASSES WANT POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE *ALREADY?*
AND DON'T FORGET THAT MUCH OF YOUR POPULATION CONSISTS OF ENGINEERS STATIONED HERE ON *TEMPORARY ASSIGNMENT*... THEIR FAMILIES ARE STILL *BACK ON EARTH!* THIS HARDLY CONSTITUTES AN IDEAL *BREEDING GROUND FOR NATIONALISM!*

THIS IS JUST ANOTHER CASE OF WORKERS DEMANDING *BETTER PAY*, ISN'T IT? AND THEY'RE ONLY DOING SO BECAUSE YOUR OWN *AGITATORS* HAVE PLOTTED TO *DESTABILIZE THEIR LIVELIHOODS!*

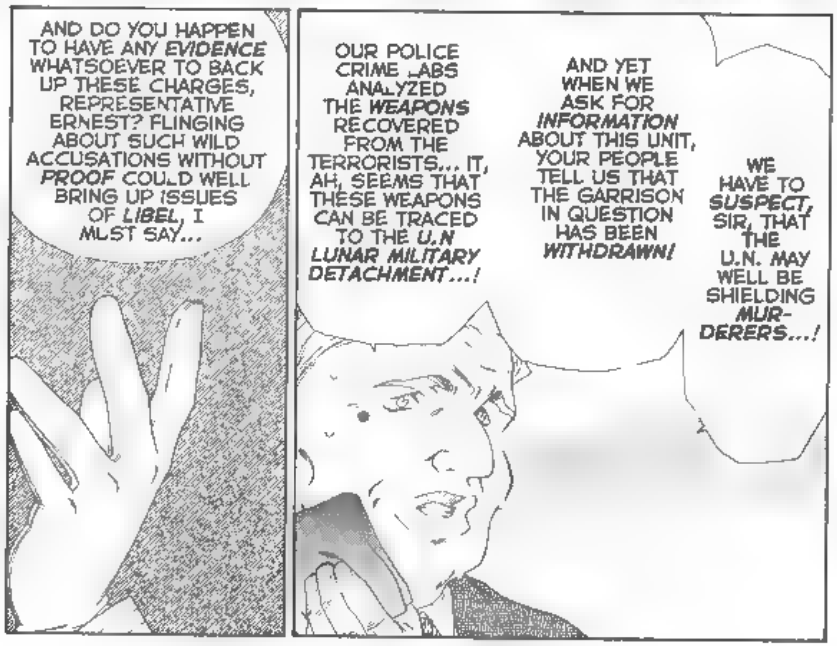
AS YOU'VE *SAID*, REPRESENTATIVE ERNEST... OUR VERY *LIVELIHOODS* ARE INDEED AT STAKE.

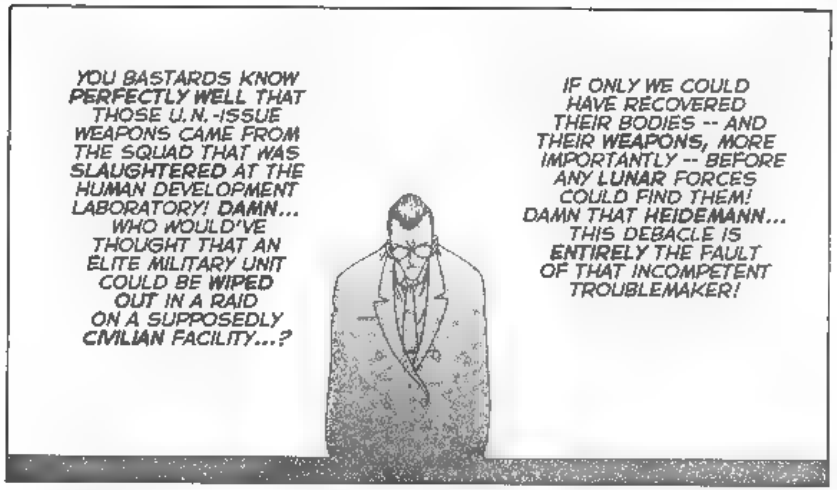

THAT IS WHY WE SO KEENLY DESIRE TO SEE *BALANCE* BROUGHT TO THE CURRENTLY *ASYMETRICAL* RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EARTH AND MOON.

BUT WE WILL *NOT* COUNTENANCE WILD, BASELESS CHARGES OF *COVERT AGITATION.*
CHANG
EXACTLY *WHAT* ARE YOU ASSERTING THAT WE'VE DONE, MAY I ASK?

KCHING

FINE! SO DYKSTRA CORPORATION'S OWN CEO WISHES TO NEGOTIATE? WELL, THIS SHOULD BE MUCH FASTER THAN DEALING WITH YOUR PAID STOOGES ON THE CITY COUNCIL!
WHOOSH
THE OCCUPATION OF THE U.N. LUNAR HEADQUARTERS BUILDING, AND THE ATROCITIES COMMITTED THERE... THAT WAS ALL YOUR CORPORATION'S DOING, CHAIRMAN AL-HALIRHA! YOUR PEOPLE MANIPULATED THE MEDIA, STIRRED UP ANTI-U.N. SENTIMENT, AND TURNED THE LUNAR PUBLIC AGAINST US!


AND DO YOU HAPPEN TO HAVE ANY EVIDENCE WHATSOEVER TO BACK UP THESE CHARGES, REPRESENTATIVE ERNEST? FLINGING ABOUT SUCH WILD ACCUSATIONS WITHOUT PROOF COULD WELL BRING UP ISSUES OF LIBEL, I MUST SAY...
OUR POLICE CRIME LABS ANALYZED THE WEAPONS RECOVERED FROM THE TERRORISTS... IT, AH, SEEMS THAT THESE WEAPONS CAN BE TRACED TO THE U.N LUNAR MILITARY DETACHMENT...!
AND YET WHEN WE ASK FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THIS UNIT, YOUR PEOPLE TELL US THAT THE GARRISON IN QUESTION HAS BEEN WITHDRAWN!
WE HAVE TO SUSPECT, SIR, THAT THE U.N. MAY WELL BE SHIELDING MURDERERS...!


YOU BASTARDS KNOW PERFECTLY WELL THAT THOSE U.N.-ISSUE WEAPONS CAME FROM THE SQUAD THAT WAS SLAUGHTERED AT THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT LABORATORY! DAMN... WHO WOULD'VE THOUGHT THAT AN ELITE MILITARY UNIT COULD BE WIPED OUT IN A RAID ON A SUPPOSEDLY CIVILIAN FACILITY...?
IF ONLY WE COULD HAVE RECOVERED THEIR BODIES -- AND THEIR WEAPONS, MORE IMPORTANTLY -- BEFORE ANY LUNAR FORCES COULD FIND THEM! DAMN THAT HEIDEMANN... THIS DEBACLE IS ENTIRELY THE FAULT OF THAT INCOMPETENT TROUBLEMAKER!

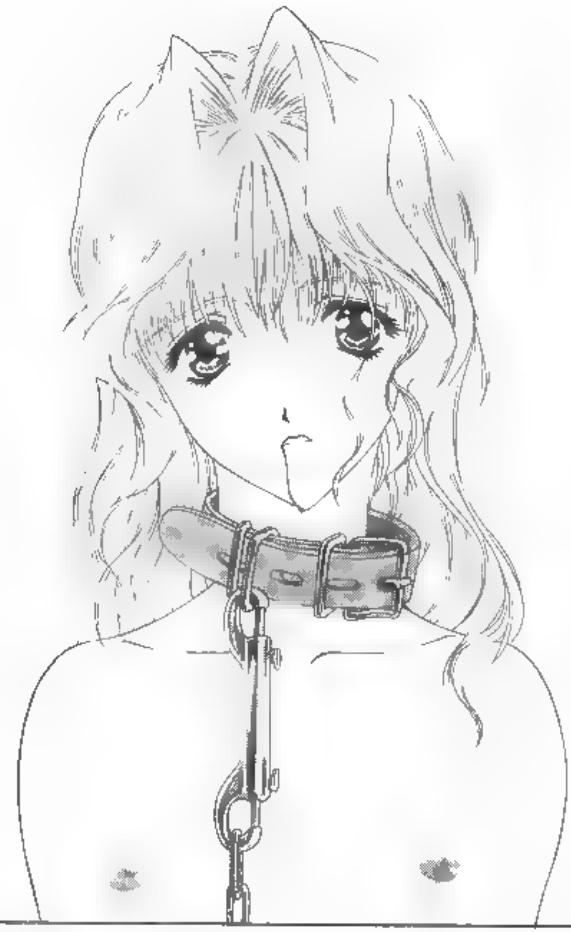
AH, EXCUSE ME...
...BUT WE'VE RECEIVED A MESSAGE FROM EARTH FOR YOU, REPRESENTATIVE ERNEST!

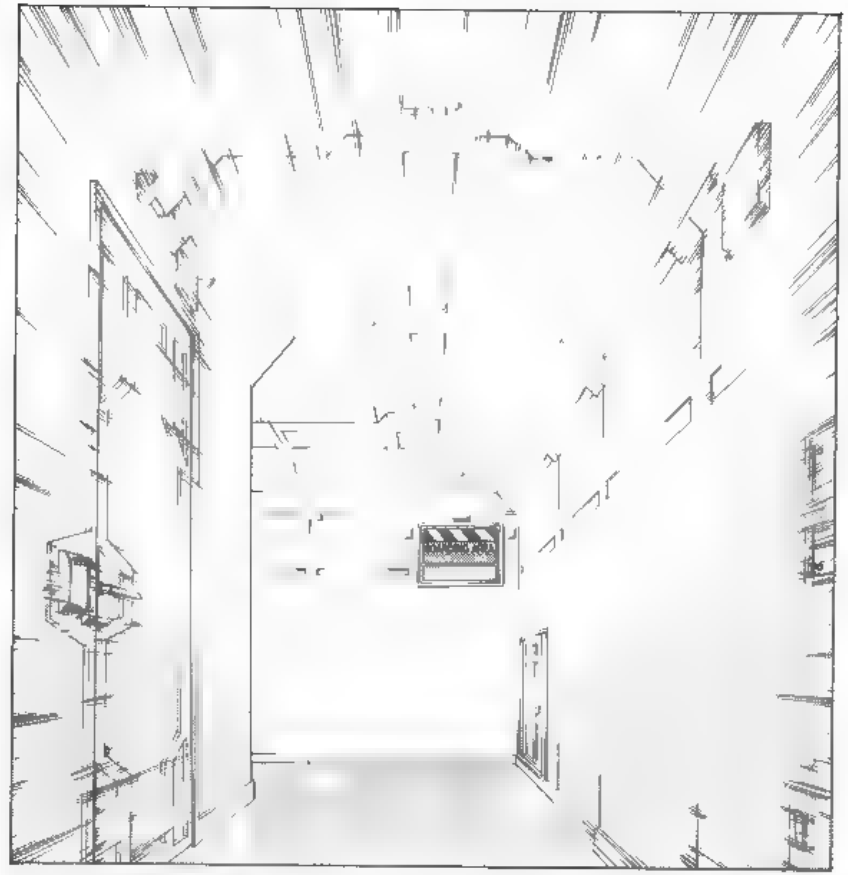
I'M IN CONFERENCE, DAMMIT! I TOLD YOU, NO INTERRUPTIONS!

SIR, IT'S A PRIORITY ALERT, DIRECT FROM U.N. HEADQUARTERS.

A PRIORITY ALERT...?
WHAT?
HAS THIS BEEN CONFIRMED? YES?
A CISLUNAR SHUTTLE HAS BEEN HIJACKED?!

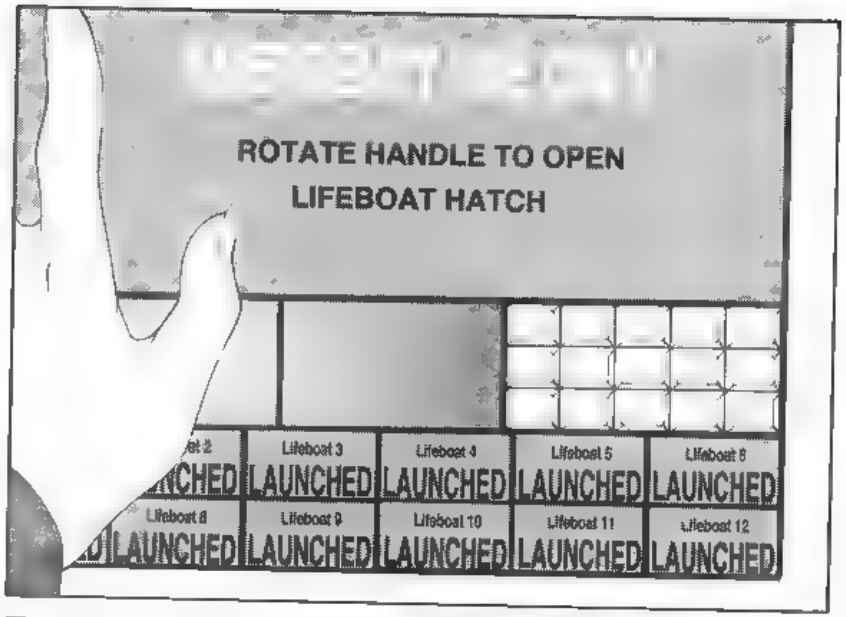
ACT 58





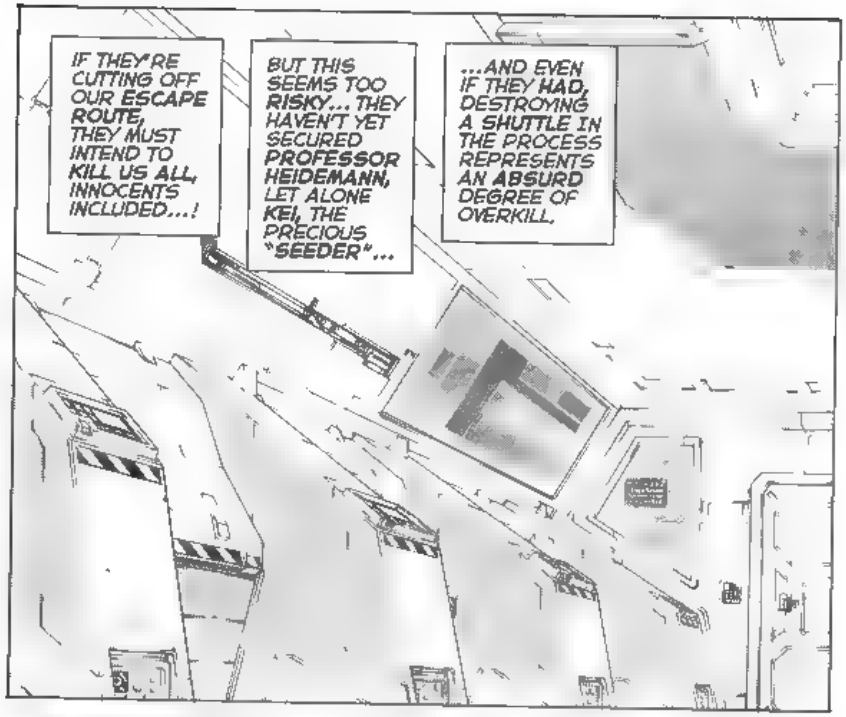
BOARDING AREA

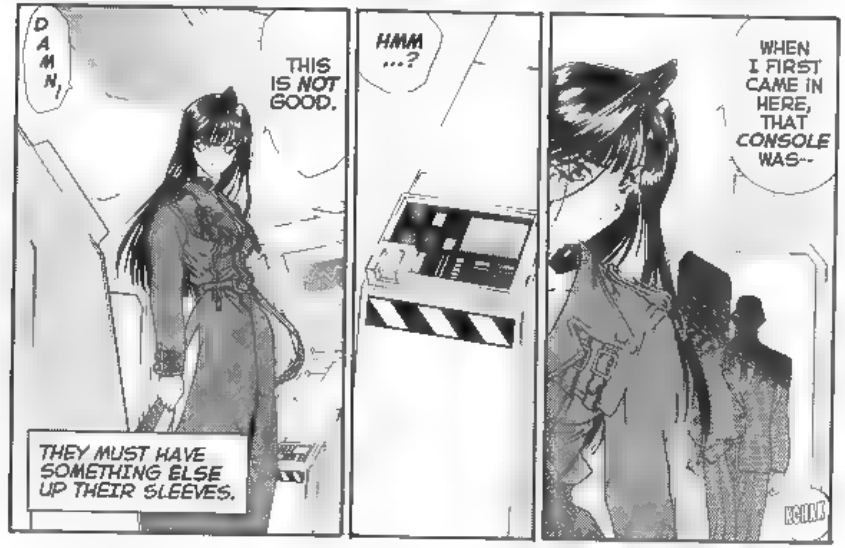
THEY WOULDN'T DARE
WHOOOSH
SWISHH
THMPP


ROTATE HANDLE TO OPEN
LIFEBOAT HATCH
Lifeboat 3
LAUNCHED
Lifeboat 4
LAUNCHED
Lifeboat 5
LAUNCHED
Lifeboat 6
LAUNCHED
LAUNCHED
LAUNCHED
Lifeboat 10
LAUNCHED
Lifeboat 11
LAUNCHED
LAUNCHED

SO THAT TREMOR WE FELT WAS THE MASS LAUNCHING OF LIFEBOATS, AFTER ALL... THEY'RE ALL GONE, SAVE ONE...

HRRG
KRRK
BUT WHY ARE THEY DOING THIS ...?


IF THEY'RE CUTTING OFF OUR ESCAPE ROUTE, THEY MUST INTEND TO KILL US ALL, INNOCENTS INCLUDED...!
BUT THIS SEEMS TOO RISKY... THEY HAVEN'T YET SECURED PROFESSOR HEIDEMANN, LET ALONE KEI, THE PRECIOUS "SEEDER"...
...AND EVEN IF THEY HAD, DESTROYING A SHUTTLE IN THE PROCESS REPRESENTS AN ABSURD DEGREE OF OVERKILL.


DAMN,
THIS IS NOT GOOD.
THEY MUST HAVE SOMETHING ELSE UP THEIR SLEEVES.
HMM ...?
WHEN I FIRST CAME IN HERE, THAT CONSOLE WAS--
CLICK

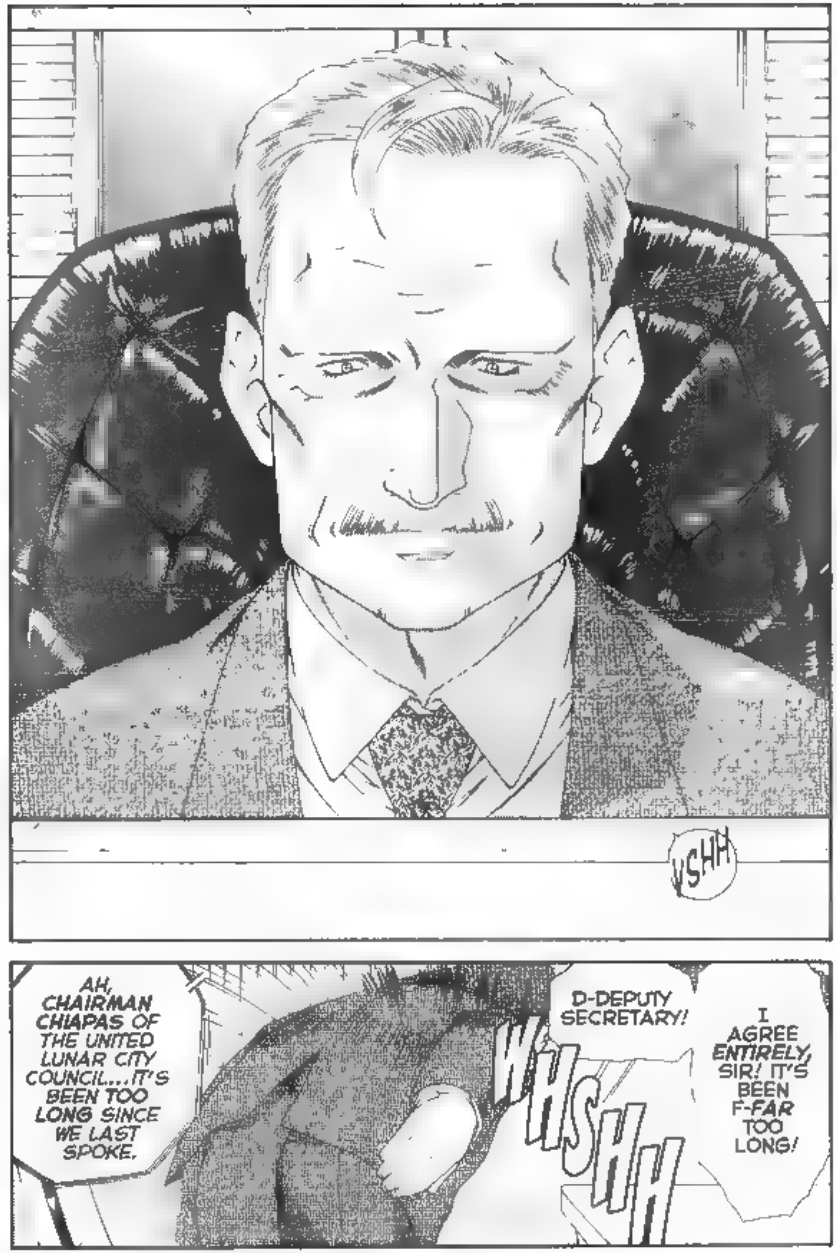
WHY, HELLO, THERE.
WE MEET AGAIN, HUH?
SO ALL THAT RUCKUS MADE YOU WANNA CHECK ON OUR SUPPOSED MEANS OF ESCAPE, AM I RIGHT?

WHAT...? WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY...?
THMP

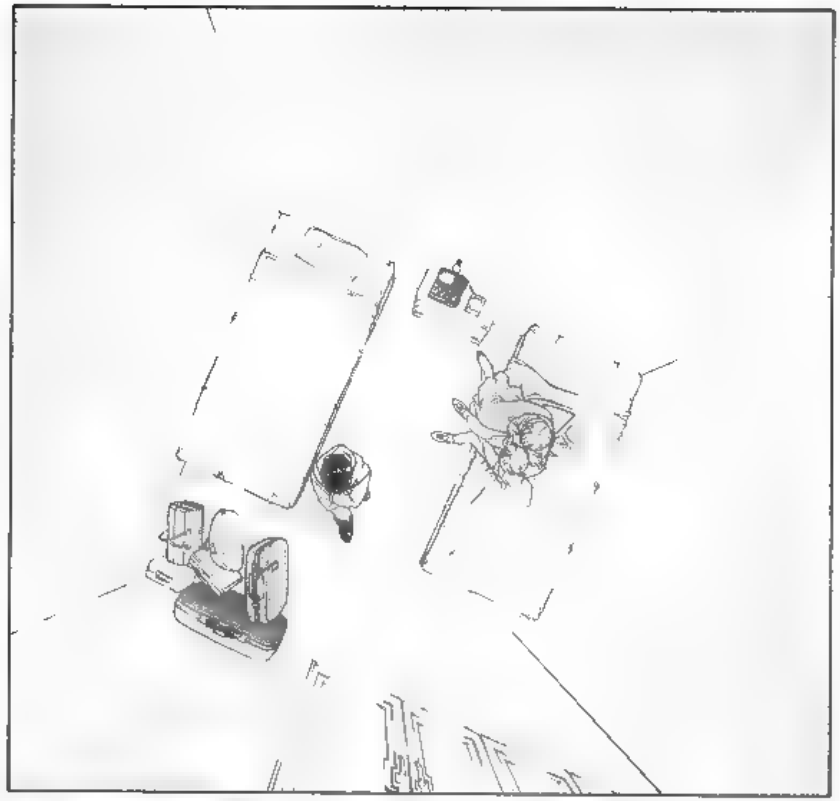
I... I DON'T *BELIEVE* IT...
HOW DID THEY BREACH *SHUTTLE SECURITY* ...?
THEY'RE DEMANDING FULL *ADMINISTRATIVE AUTONOMY* FOR THE MOON, IN EXCHANGE FOR THE LIVES OF A HUNDRED OR MORE *HOSTAGES*...
HAHH

SO, OUT OF THE BLUE, WE RECEIVE A NEW *TERRORIST ULTIMATUM*... WHICH JUST *HAPPENS* TO MATCH YOUR *OWN* DEMANDS.
I CAN ONLY TELL YOU, REPRESENTATIVE ERNEST, THAT THESE EXTREMISTS' DEMANDS SEEM *ENTIRELY REASONABLE*, THOUGH THEIR *TACTICS* ARE RATHER LESS SO...
SHRKK
DAMN YOU ...!
R I G ■ T.
I'M OPENING UP THE *HOTLINE* TO U.N. HEAD-QUARTERS ON EARTH.
THE SUPREME COUNCIL'S *DEPUTY SECRETARY* WISHES TO SPEAK WITH YOU *DIRECTLY*.
BIP BIP BIP
D-DEPUTY SECRETARY *VISKEIT* ...?!

AH.
SO, THE EVER-CAUTIOUS U.N. SUPREME COUNCIL...
...IS, FOR ONCE, ACTING WITH ALACRITY.
IS THERE ANY PARTICULAR REASON FOR THIS SUDDEN ZEAL...?
THAT'S... THAT'S NOT FOR ME TO SAY, CHAIRMAN.
NOW THAT THE DEPUTY SECRETARY HAS INTERVENED, THIS MATTER IS OUT OF MY HANDS!
YOU CAN ASK HIM YOURSELF!
VREEE


VSHH
AH, CHAIRMAN CHIAPAS OF THE UNITED LUNAR CITY COUNCIL... IT'S BEEN TOO LONG SINCE WE LAST SPOKE.
WHSHH
D-DEPUTY SECRETARY!
I AGREE ENTIRELY, SIR! IT'S BEEN F-FAR TOO LONG!

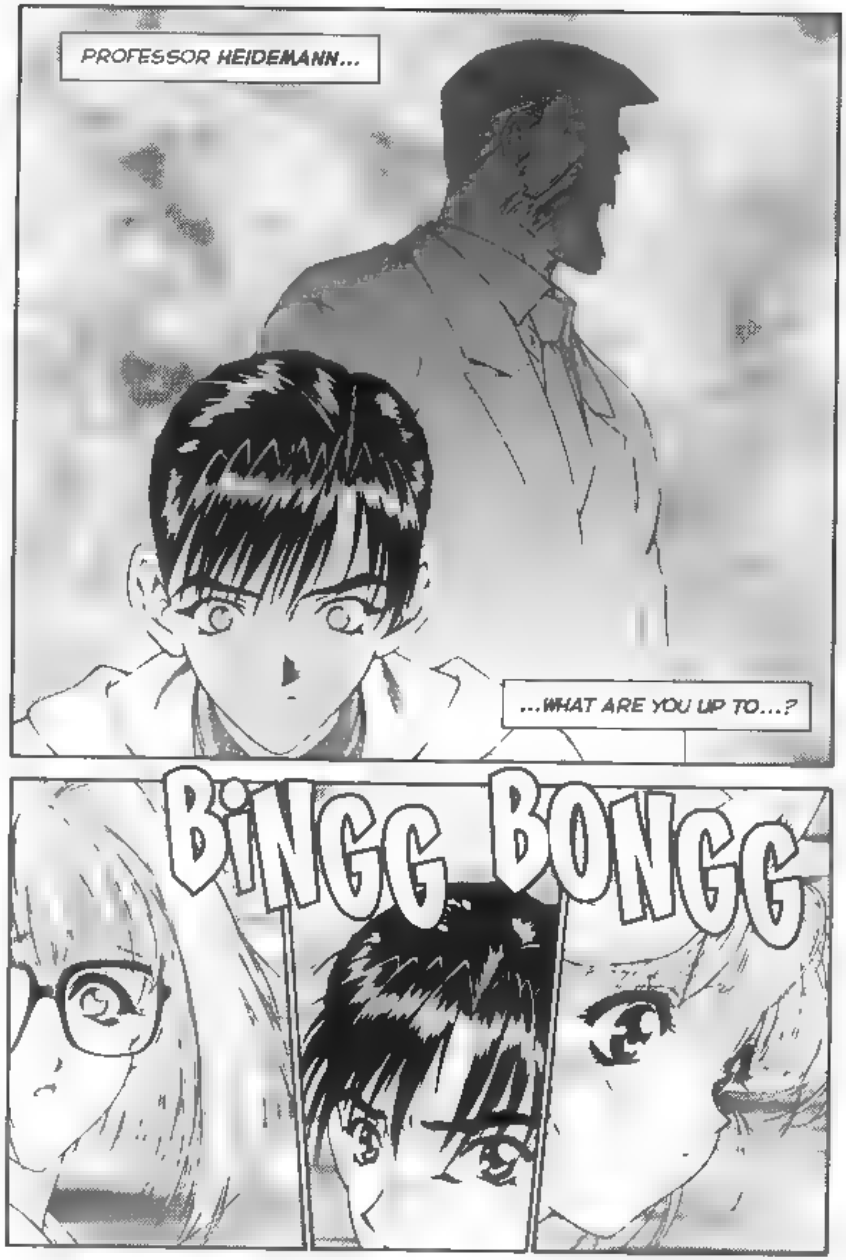
S-SIR, IT'S AN HONOR TO--
SO, WE MEET AT LAST, DEPUTY SECRETARY VISKEIT.
I AM ESSAM AL-HALIRHA, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF DYKSTRA CORPO-RATION.
THE PLEASURE, SIR...
...IS ENTIRELY MINE.



BUT WHY WOULD ANYONE WANT TO... DETAIN... MY FATHER ...?

I DO HOPE HE'S SAFE...
DON'T WORRY, OKAY? MISS M-ZAK'S ON THE CASE, AFTER ALL... SHE'LL FIND HIM IN NO TIME!
SURE, THAT BOOBY TRAP TRASHED HIS ROOM...
...BUT WE DIDN'T DISCOVER ANY ACTUAL SIGNS OF A STRUGGLE, THOUGH!
I'M SURE THAT HE'S...
NO SIGNS OF A STRUGGLE...?
BUT... WHY NOT...?
DIDN'T THE PROFESSOR RESIST?
OR DID THEY SNATCH HIM SO QUICKLY THAT HE COULDN'T PUT UP A FIGHT? BUT HOW...?
DID THEY USE A GUN? OR DRUGS...?
WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE...?

ACT 59


PROFESSOR HEIDEMANN...
...WHAT ARE YOU UP TO...?
BiNGG BONGG

KSHHH
OH...!
DOCTOR HEIDEMANN! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT...?
FATHER?
FATHER, IS IT REALLY YOU...?
KEI? NURSE HISHIKA?
THANK GOD! YOU'RE BOTH UNHARMED...?
Y-YES, FATHER...
FLIP FLIP
HRMM... ARE YOU GOING TO LET ME IN, KEI?
OF COURSE! RIGHT AWAY!
WAIT, KEI!
MISS M-ZAK SAID NOT TO OPEN THE DOOR FOR ANY-ONE!
SHIKK

OH, DON'T BE SILLY, SUNAO!
ATTIM MUST BE WITH HIM!
COME RIGHT IN, FATHER!
NO, KEI! DON'T--
KCHAK

WHOA!
SO THIS IS A LIFEBOAT BAY, HUH?
HMM?
AH!
WONDER WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DO THIS ...?
SHIP

WAIT! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
SHNKK
VRMMM

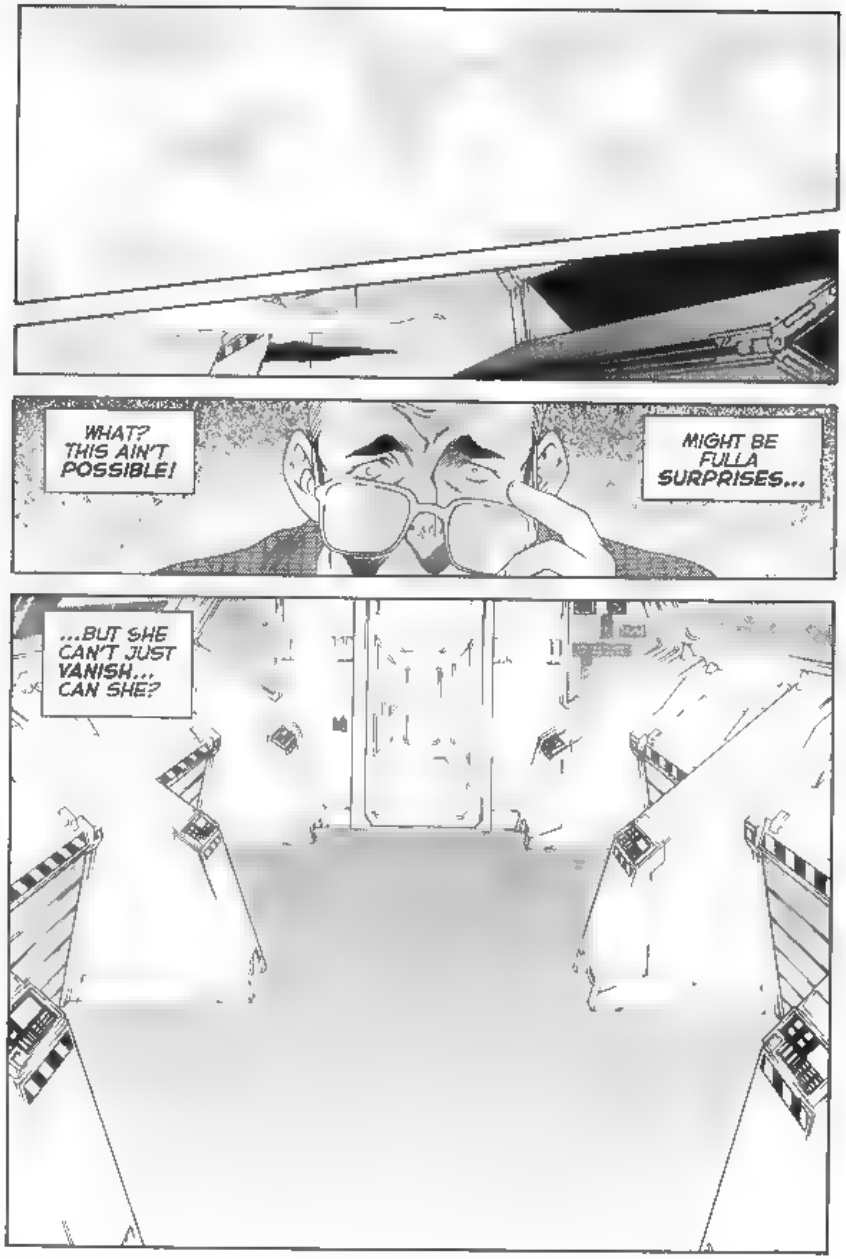
VRMMM
WHOOSH
SLAMM
SLAMM
!!

OH, MAN...
...THIS'LL COST A BUNDLE TO FIX.
KT-NGG
BASTARD!!
LET'S KEEP THIS ACCIDENT OUR LITTLE SECRET, OKAY?
KLIK

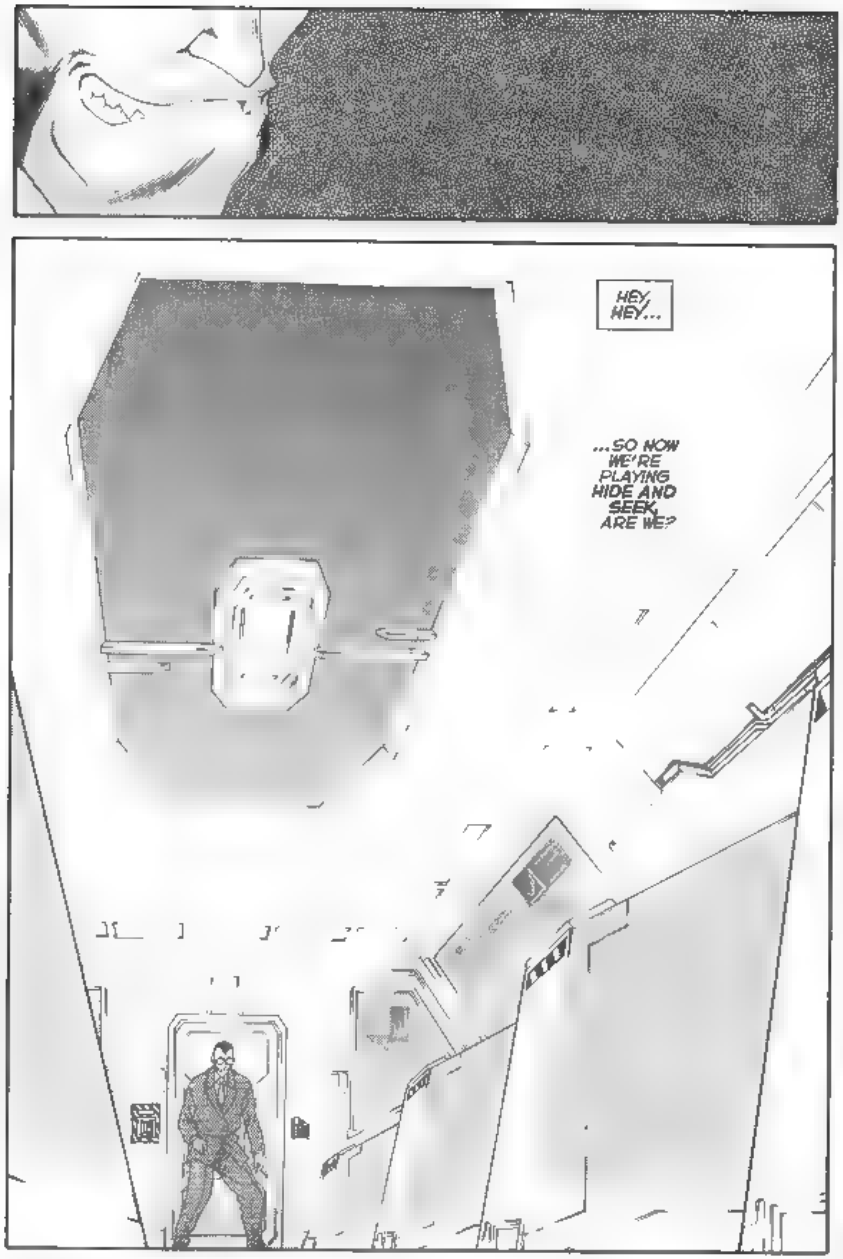
NO --!
WHSHH
KCHNKK
KSHANGG
BREEP
WARNING! DEPRESSURIZATION ALERT!
FSHOOOM

WHROOOM
AGK
FWAPP
CHAPP
!
AIRLOCK OVERRIDE
FOR EMERGENCY USE ONLY
DAMN... WITH THE OVERRIDE CONTROLS RUINED, I CAN'T REPRES-SURIZE THIS LIFEBOAT BAY...!
YOU FOOL! ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND--?!

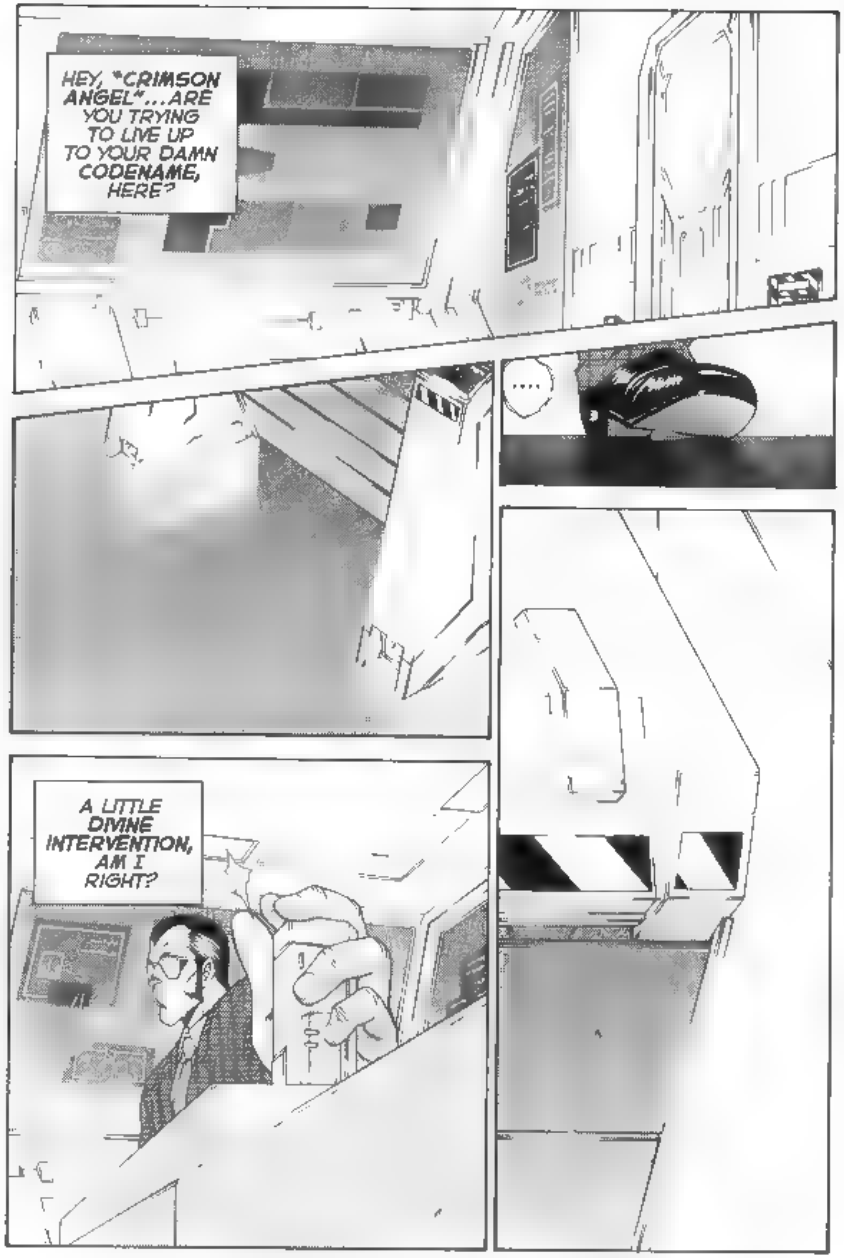
AM I CRAZY? NOT ME, HONEY.
SORRY 'BOUT NOT PLAY-ING FAIR, HERE...
...BUT THERE'S NOTHING I LIKE MORE THAN A NICE, BRACING HIT OF VACUUM.
VACUUM ...? YOU MUST BE THE SAME THUG FROM THE UNDER-GROUND HIGHWAY ...!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, THOUGH... I CAN HANG OUT IN A VACUUM JUST FINE.
DON'T THINK I COULD'VE GONE TOE TO TOE WITH YOU, UNDER NORMAL CIRCUM-STANCES...
...BUT, HEY, THE WEAK GOTTA WIN BY THEIR WITS, DON'T THEY?

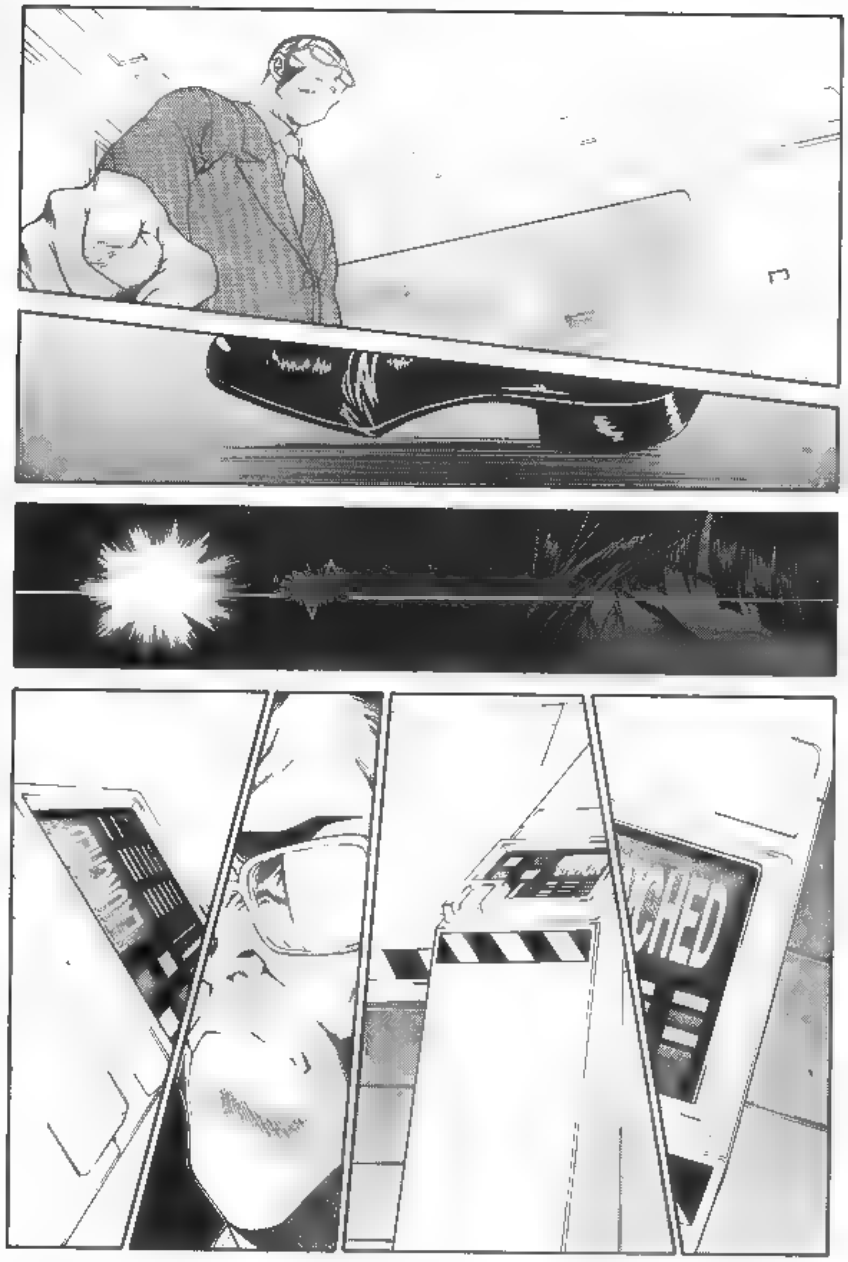

WHAT? THIS AIN'T POSSIBLE!
MIGHT BE FULLA SURPRISES...
...BUT SHE CAN'T JUST VANISH... CAN SHE?

ACT 60


HEY, HEY...
...SO NOW WE'RE PLAYING HIDE AND SEEK, ARE WE?

ONLY PROBLEM IS...
...AIN'T NO FRIGGIN' PLACE TO HIDE IN HERE!
THERE'S NOWHERE TO GO!
SO, THEN...
...WHERE THE HELL IS SHE?!


HEY, "CRIMSON ANGEL"... ARE YOU TRYING TO LIVE UP TO YOUR DAMN CODENAME, HERE?
....
A LITTLE DIVINE INTERVENTION, AM I RIGHT?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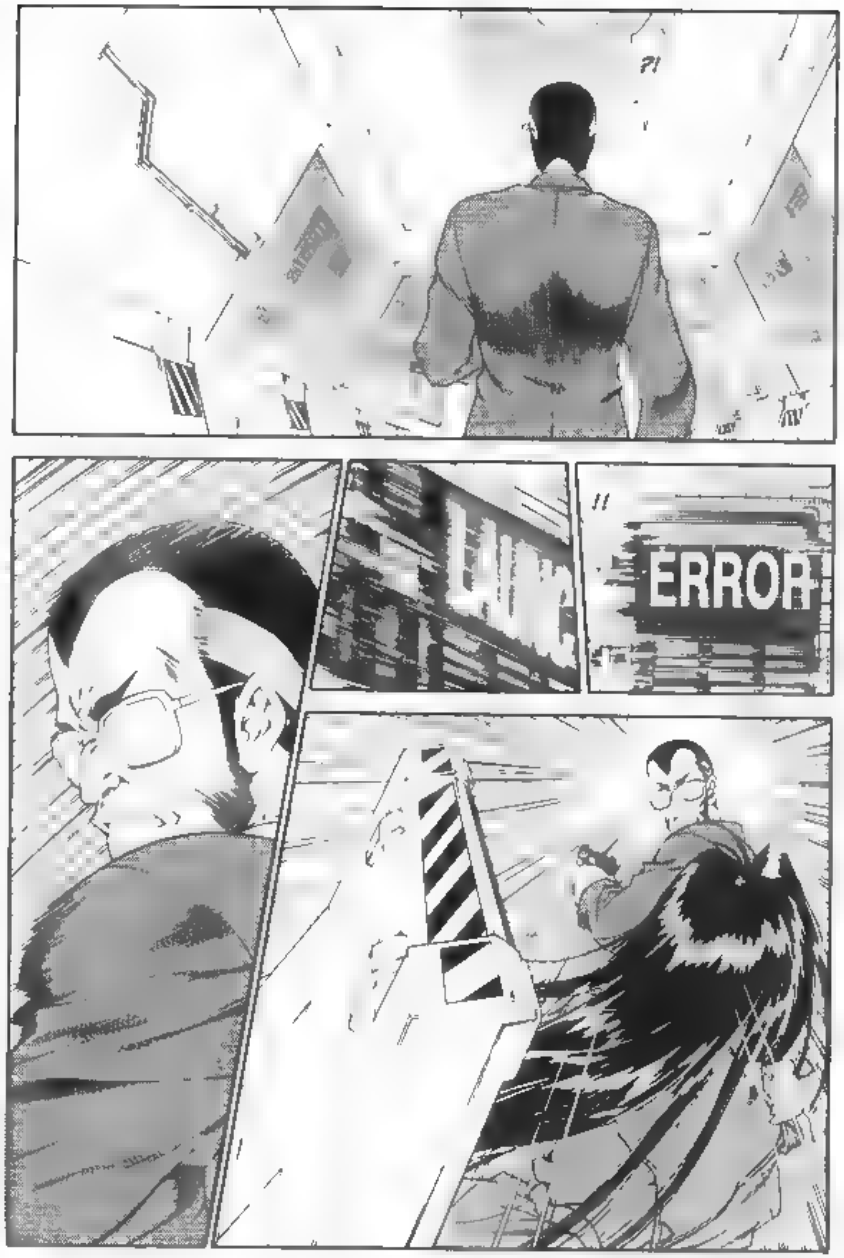
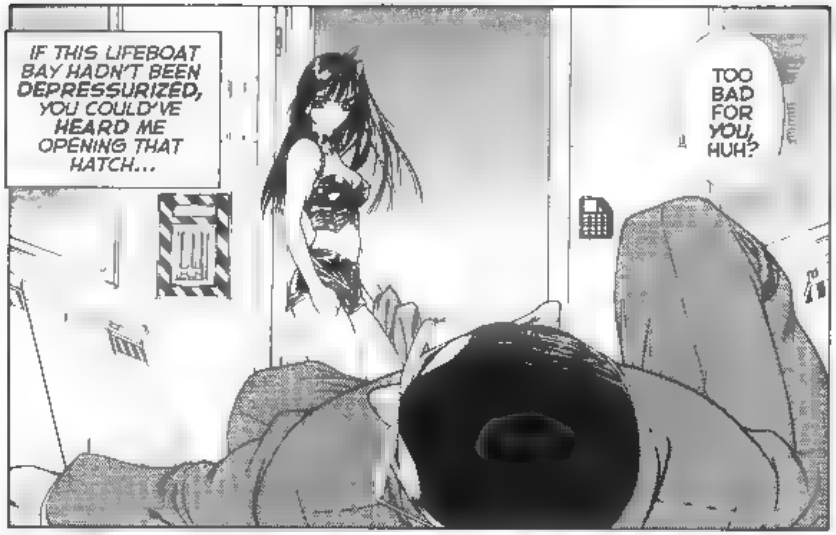

ERROR

AIRLOCK OVERRIDE
FOR EMERGENC USE ONLY
....
SHOOM

GKK
KCHAK
HAAAHH
SHHHH
SHHHH
HUHH
HAHH
HEE
THAT LIFEBOAT BOARDING HATCH... IT'S THE ONE THAT KEI PEEKED AT, EARLIER...!
HUHH
HAHH

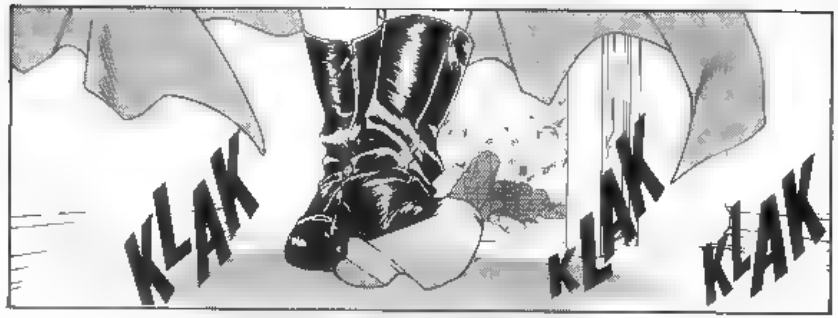
LUCKY FOR ME...THAT BIZARRE POWER OF HERS...
...IT MUST HAVE DAMAGED THE LIFEBOAT'S LAUNCH MECHANISM.
MOST OF THE TIME, YOUR INVOLUNTARY DISRUPTION OF ELECTRONICS IS AN ANNOYANCE...
...BUT THIS TIME, IT SAVED MY HIDE, KEI...!
TUT, TUT... HOIST BY YOUR OWN PETARD, WEREN'T YOU...?

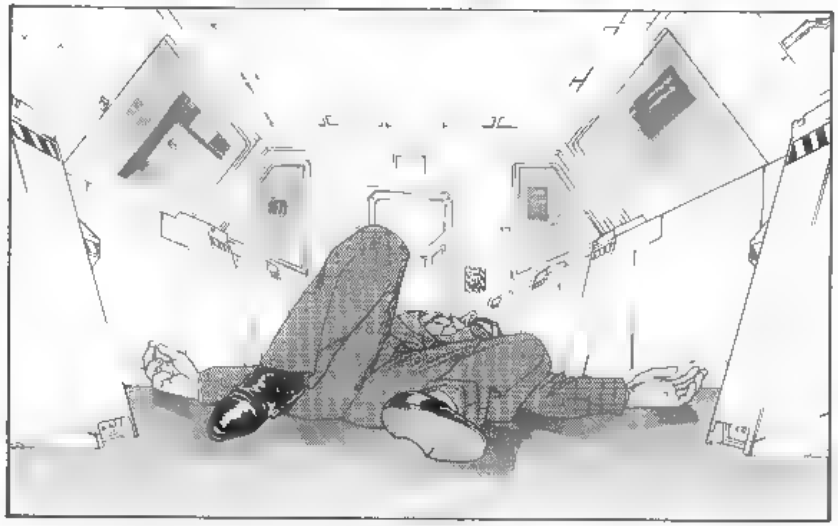

IF THIS LIFEBOAT BAY HADN'T BEEN DEPRESSURIZED, YOU COULD'VE HEARD ME OPENING THAT HATCH...
TOO BAD FOR YOU, HUH?

IF THEY WERE THIS EAGER TO GET ME OUT OF THE WAY, FIRST. .
. THEY MUST HAVE A MAJOR OPERATION UNDERWAY.

HAHH.
WELL, AT LEAST THIS FELLOW WON'T BE CONTRIBUTING FURTHER TO THEIR PLANS, WHATEVER THEY MIGHT BE...!

YOU WERE CERTAINLY A DURABLE SORT, MY FRIEND...
...BUT NOT QUITE AS DURABLE AS MYSELF...!





Act 61

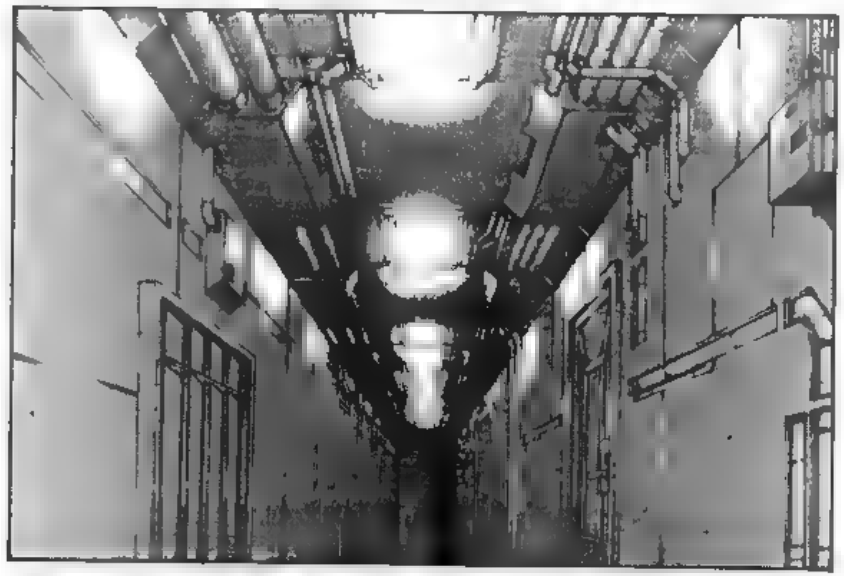
...AND LUCKILY, JUST AS THEY ATTEMPTED TO *ABDUCT* ME, THIS *U.N. AGENT* CAME TO MY RESCUE.
GOODNESS, SIR... [redacted] ARE ABOARD THIS SHUTTLE...?

ATTIM!
I WONDER IF SOMETHING'S *HAPPENED* TO HER...!
MAYBE I SHOULD *CALL* HER...? WHERE DID I PUT THAT *PHONE*...?
DON'T!
SHMPP
IF *MISS M-ZAK*-- AND *REN,* TOO, COME TO THINK OF IT-- ARE OUT FIGHTING *BAD GUYS,* A RINGING PHONE COULD GET THEM *KILLED,* KEI.

UM... WELL... B-BUT I'M SO WORRIED...
WE SHOULD AT LEAST HAVE TOLD HER TO CONTACT US AND LET US KNOW US WHAT HAPPENED...

YOU'RE WORRIED, KEI... BUT SO AM I. .THIS SENSE OF DREAD I'M FEELING IS AWFUL.
EVEN THE PROFESSOR DOESN'T SEEM HIMSELF...! I WOULDN'T HAVE THOUGHT I'D FEEL SO NAKED WITHOUT MISS M-ZAK AND REN AROUND, BUT...
...NOW, IT'S ALL UP TO ME.

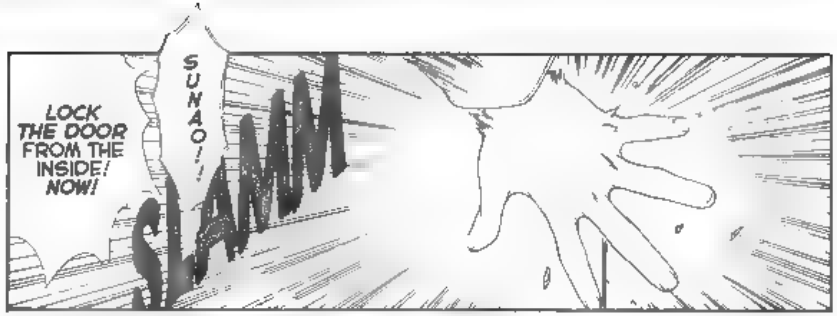
KEEP OUT
- STAFF ONLY -



THIS WAY, PLEASE.
HUH?

WAIT...HE CAN'T BE WHAT I'M THINKING...!
NO..
...NO..!
OH, GOD... IT IS ALL UP TO ME, ISN'T IT...?

SUNAO?!
WHMP
KCHAK
YES... IT'S OPEN...!
SUNAO!
H-HELP, NURSE HISHIKA... SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH SUNAO...!
SUNAO, DEAR... WHAT'S UP?
SHNKK
KCHAK
OH...!
HUH?
SUNAO?!
FWAPP
HAPP


SUNAO!!
LOCK THE DOOR FROM THE INSIDE! NOW!
SLAMM

WHAT?!
SUNAO, WHAT ARE YOU DOING? WHAT'S GOING ON?
SUNAO!!
BAMM
BAMM
COME CLOSER, PROFESSOR HEIDEMANN!
THERE'S SOMETHING I NEED TO ASK YOU!

SUNAO, MY BOY... WHAT'S COME OVER YOU?
PRO-FESSOR, I FIND YOUR ACTIONS SUSPI-CIOUS...!
IS THAT MAN REALLY WITH THE U.N.?

ACT 62

SUNAO!
SUNAO!
BAMM
BAMM
BAMM
BAMM
SUNAO...! OPEN THIS DOOR!
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU...?
SUNAO?
BAMM
LET ME OUT OF HERE ...!
KEI
BAMM
BAMM
SUNAO!!

JUST NOW, PROFESSOR HEIDEMANN...
...I WILL PROTECT YOU!
...THIS DOOR WASN'T LOCKED, WAS IT...?
PARDON?
WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU BABBLING ABOUT, SON?
SIR. PLEASE HEAR ME OUT.

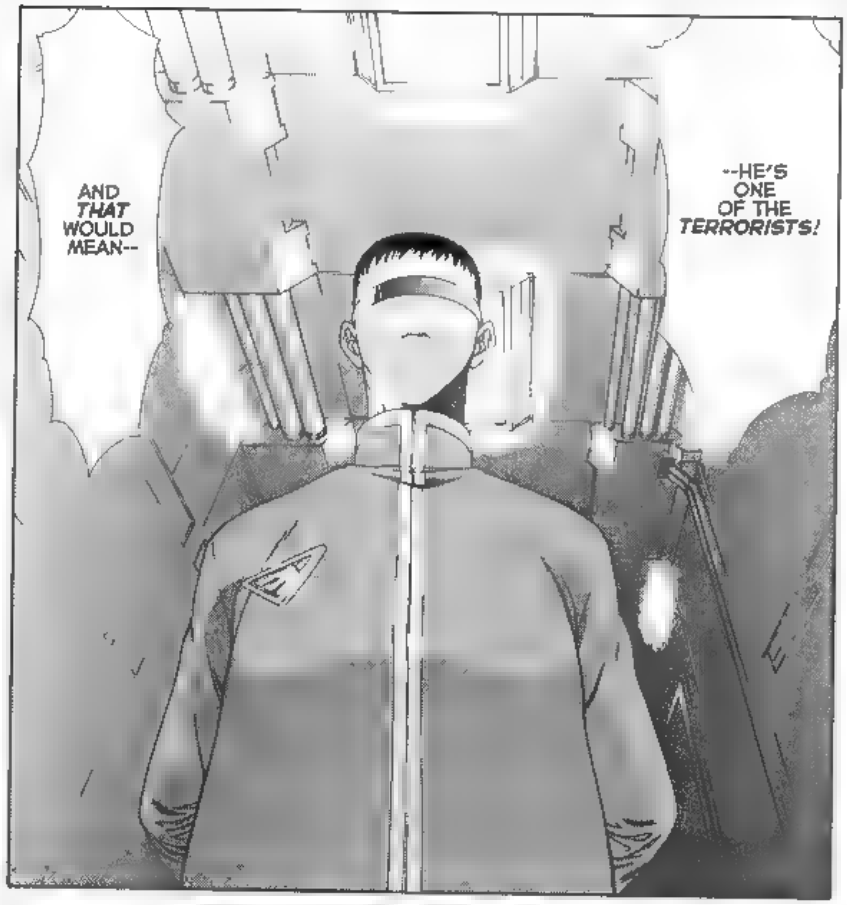
WHAT IF SOMEONE HAD BEEN *LYING IN AMBUSH* BEHIND THIS DOOR?

YOUR SO-CALLED *"U.N. AGENT"* JUST WALKED RIGHT BY IT, *DIDN'T* HE...?
HE'S BREEZED PAST *ONE* DOOR AFTER *ANOTHER!*

AROUND THESE *CORNERS* ...
DOWN THE *STAIRS* ...

...AND PAST *THIS* DOOR, TOO... HE NEVER CHECKED *ANYTHING.*
DOESN'T THAT SEEM A LITTLE *CARELESS* TO YOU...?

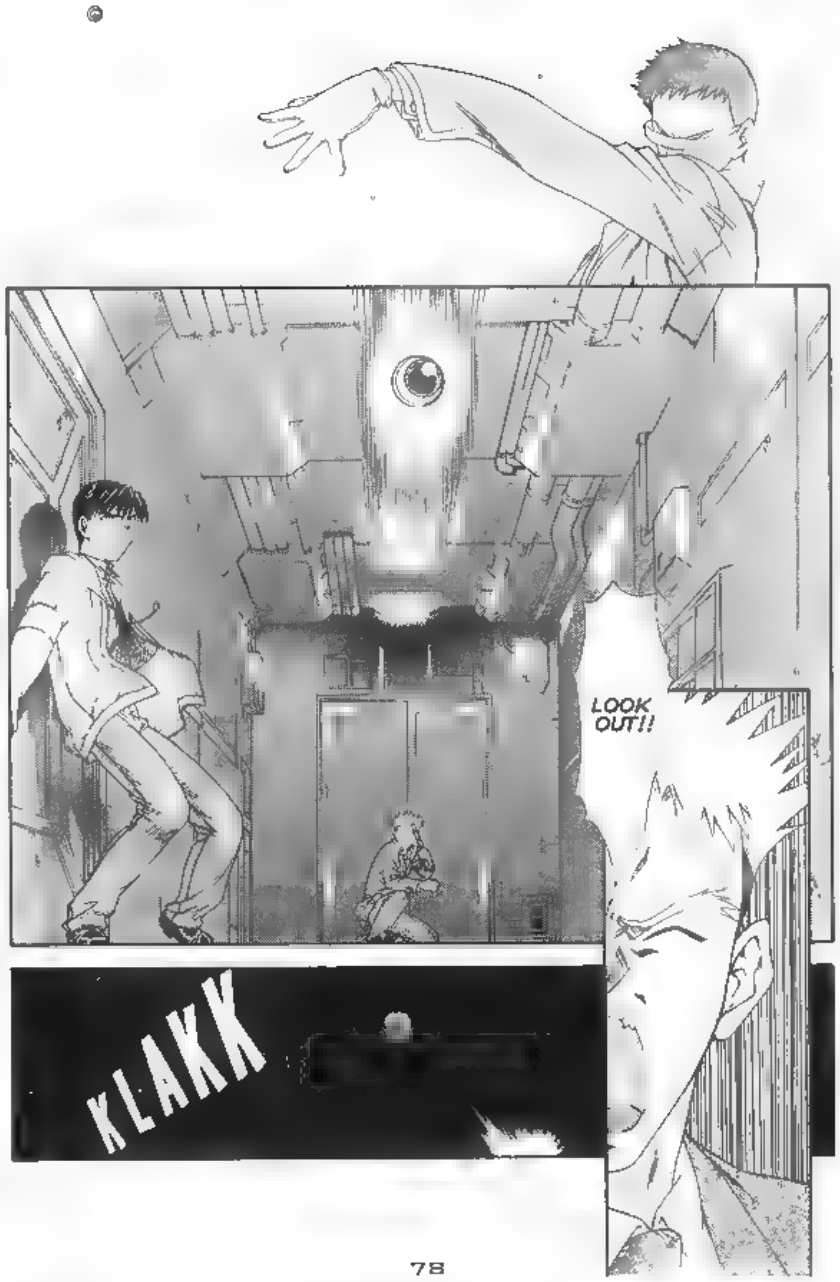
MAYBE HE DIDN'T *NEED* TO CHECK!
MAYBE HE *KNOWS* THAT WE WON'T BE ATTACKED!


AND *THAT* WOULD MEAN--
--HE'S ONE OF THE *TERRORISTS!*

SHING
SHHH
FSHING

!
KRAKK
KRAKK

!!!
RENI
KOFF


LOOK OUT!!
KLAKK

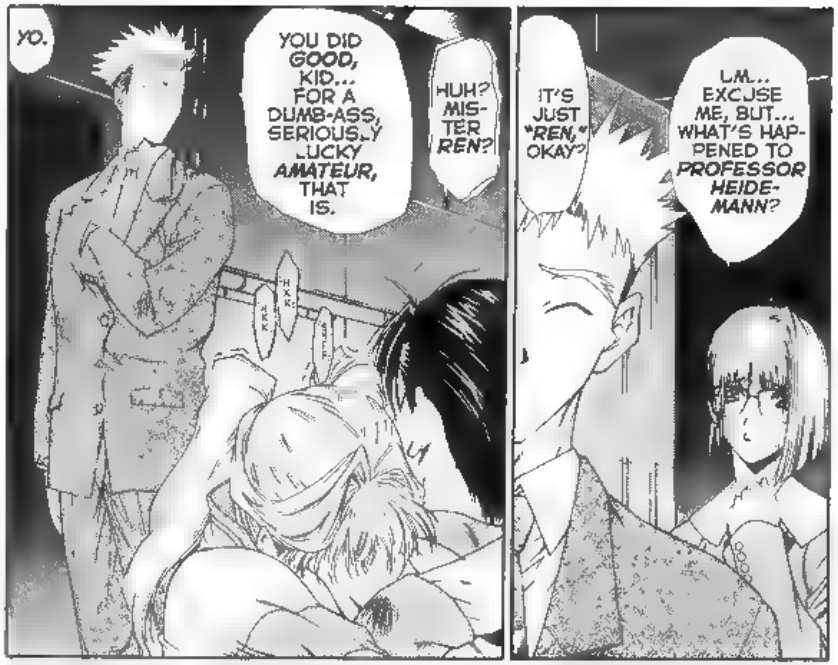
FZZZK
AAA!!

WHAT'S HAPPENING? TELL ME! WERE THOSE GUNSHOTS OUT THERE ...?
SUNAO!!
BAMM BAMM KCHAK KCHAK
SUNAO! ANSWER ME!!

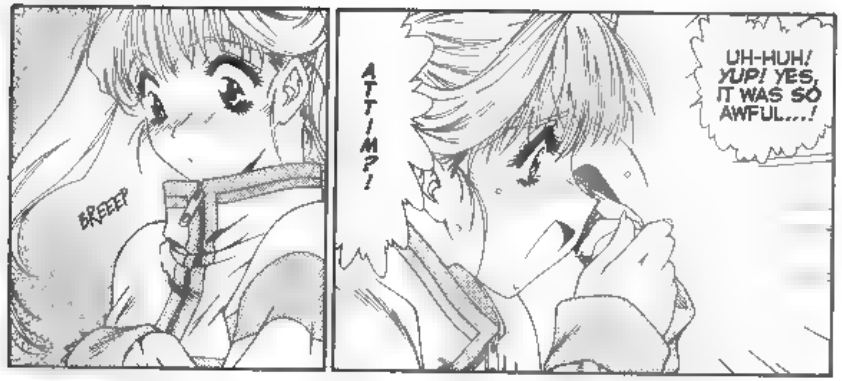
M-MY EYES...
:NGKK:

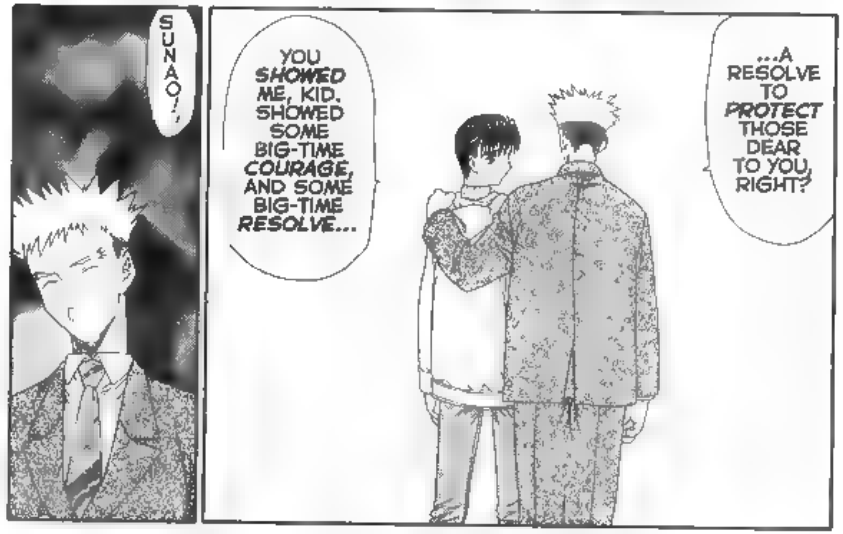
WHAMM
BAMM
NGAA!!

HDD
GYEEK!
:OOF:
WHAM!
SUNAO! SUNAO! SUNAO! SUNAO!!!
OWW!
WHOA WHOA WHOA!
WHAPP

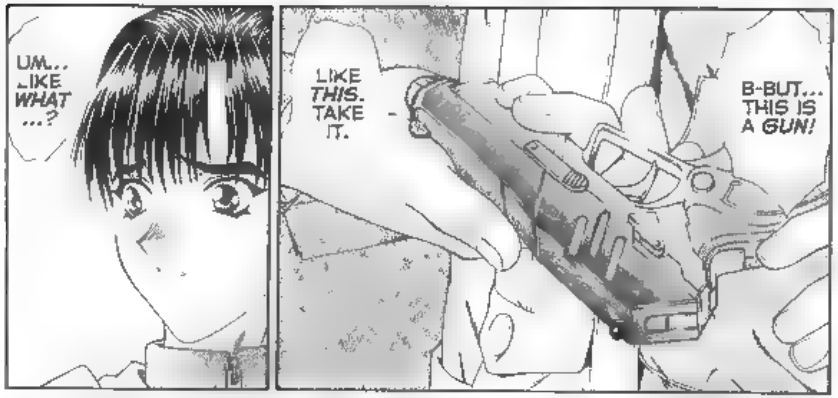

YO.
YOU DID GOOD, KID... FOR A DUMB-ASS, SERIOUSLY LUCKY AMATEUR, THAT IS.
HUH? MISTER REN?
IT'S JUST "REN," OKAY?
UM... EXCUSE ME, BUT... WHAT'S HAPPENED TO PROFESSOR HEIDEMANN?

OH, DARN... THAT'S RIGHT.
LOOKS LIKE THE BAD GUYS SNATCHED HIM. WHOOPS.
HUH? WHAT? HE'S BEEN TAKEN CAPTIVE ...?
HEY, EVERYTHING'S COOL, LITTLE LADY...
...NOT LIKE THEY CAN GET OFF THIS SHUTTLE, CAN THEY?


BREEEP
ATTIM?!
UH-UHH! YUP! YES, IT WAS SO AWFUL...!


SUNAO?
YOU SHOWED ME, KID. SHOWED SOME BIG-TIME COURAGE, AND SOME BIG-TIME RESOLVE...
...A RESOLVE TO PROTECT THOSE DEAR TO YOU, RIGHT?

BUT THESE GUYS ARE SERIOUS, SUNAO.
NEXT TIME, YOU'LL NEED A LITTLE MORE THAN JUST COURAGE AND RESOLVE ...!


UM... ..IKE WHAT ...?
LIKE THIS. TAKE IT.
B-BUT... THIS IS A GUN!

REMEMBER THE "RESOLVE" THING, KID...
...'CAUSE YOU MAY NEED TO KILL TO PROTECT YOUR OWN...

UM... ER... WELL...
...ATTIM SAID THAT WE SHOULD GET BACK TO THE STATEROOM...
...AND SHE ALSO SAID...AND I DON'T UNDER-STAND THIS AT ALL...
...BUT SHE SAID THAT I SAVED HER LIFE, SOME-HOW!

Act 63

THMPP

I WAS CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR *INJURY*, NOT YOUR *EFFICACY* AS AN OPERATIVE.
HAHH??
THANK YOU...FOR YOUR *CONCERN*, DOCTOR.
GOOD LORD... I'M BEING PITIED BY MY OWN TARGET ...!
YES, I HAVE INDEED BEEN *SHOT*... BUT I'M WEARING *PROTECTIVE GEAR*, SO THIS *ISN'T* A SERIOUS PROBLEM.
YOU'RE *SURE* ABOUT THIS ...?
OF COURSE I'M SURE, DOCTOR.

THE PROBLEM ISN'T THAT I'VE BEEN SHOT...
...THE PROBLEM IS THE MAN WHO SHOT ME!
THAT INCREDIBLE TRICKSTER...
...SUCH PRECISE AIM, WITH THE GOOD DOCTOR IN THE LINE OF FIRE, NO LESS... NO, WAIT!
COULD HE HAVE BEEN TARGETING THE PROFESSOR IN THE FIRST PLACE? IT'S CERTAINLY POSSIBLE!
HE'S DEMONSTRABLY UNSCRUPULOUS ENOUGH...
...GIVEN THAT HE WAS FIRING HYPER-PENETRATION ROUNDS UNIVERSALLY BANNED FROM BEING CARRIED ABOARD SPACECRAFT!

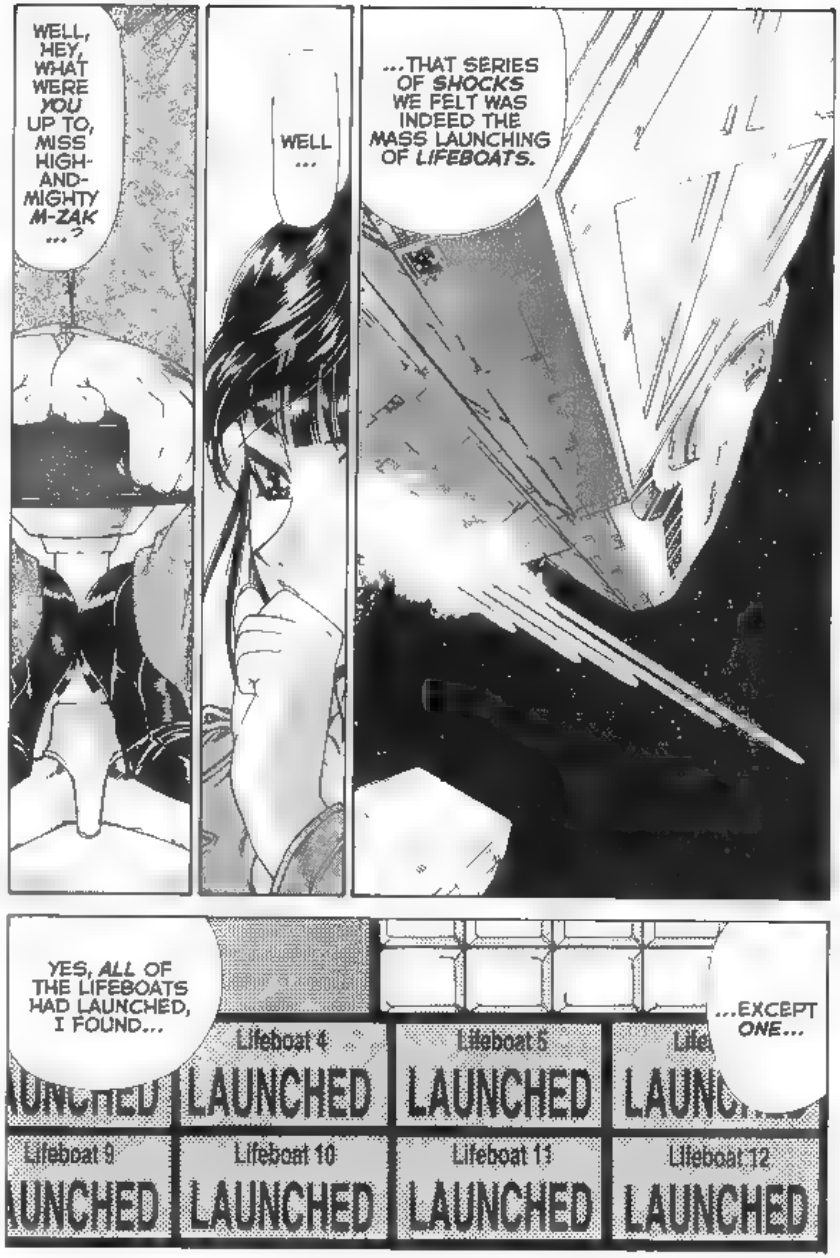
DOES THE U.N. SIMPLY NOT NEED HEIDEMANN ANY LONGER?
OR WILL THEY DO ANYTHING TO PREVENT FURTHER DEFECTIONS?

DIFFICULT TO SAY... BUT REGARD-LESS OF THE U.N.'S MOTIVES...
...IT MAY WELL BE THE CASE THAT THE U.N. OPERATIVE THAT WE REALLY NEED TO WORRY ABOUT...
...ISN'T THE FAMED "CRIMSON ANGEL," BUT...

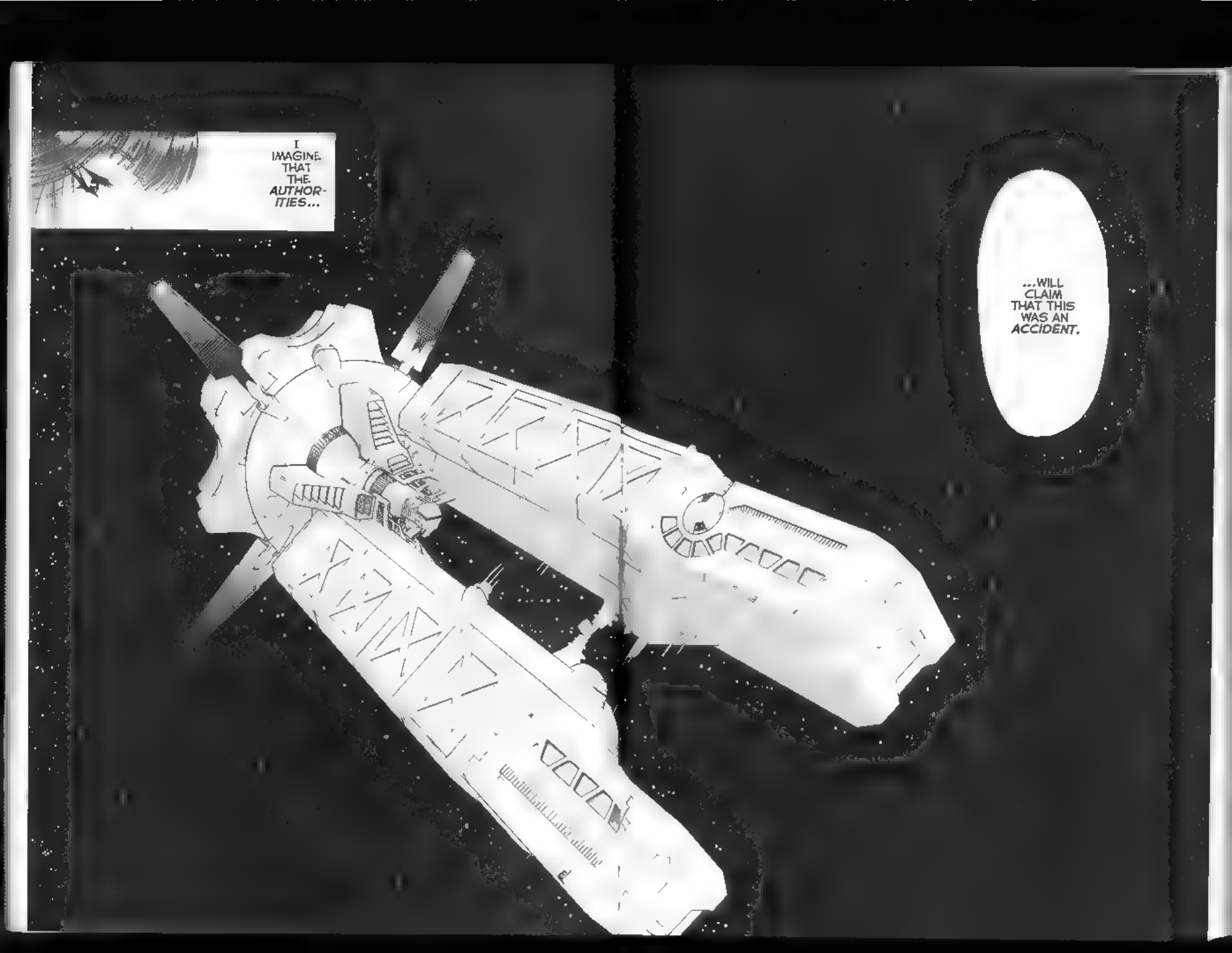
...THIS MOST FORMIDABLE OF AGENTS...!
SORREE!
WHAP

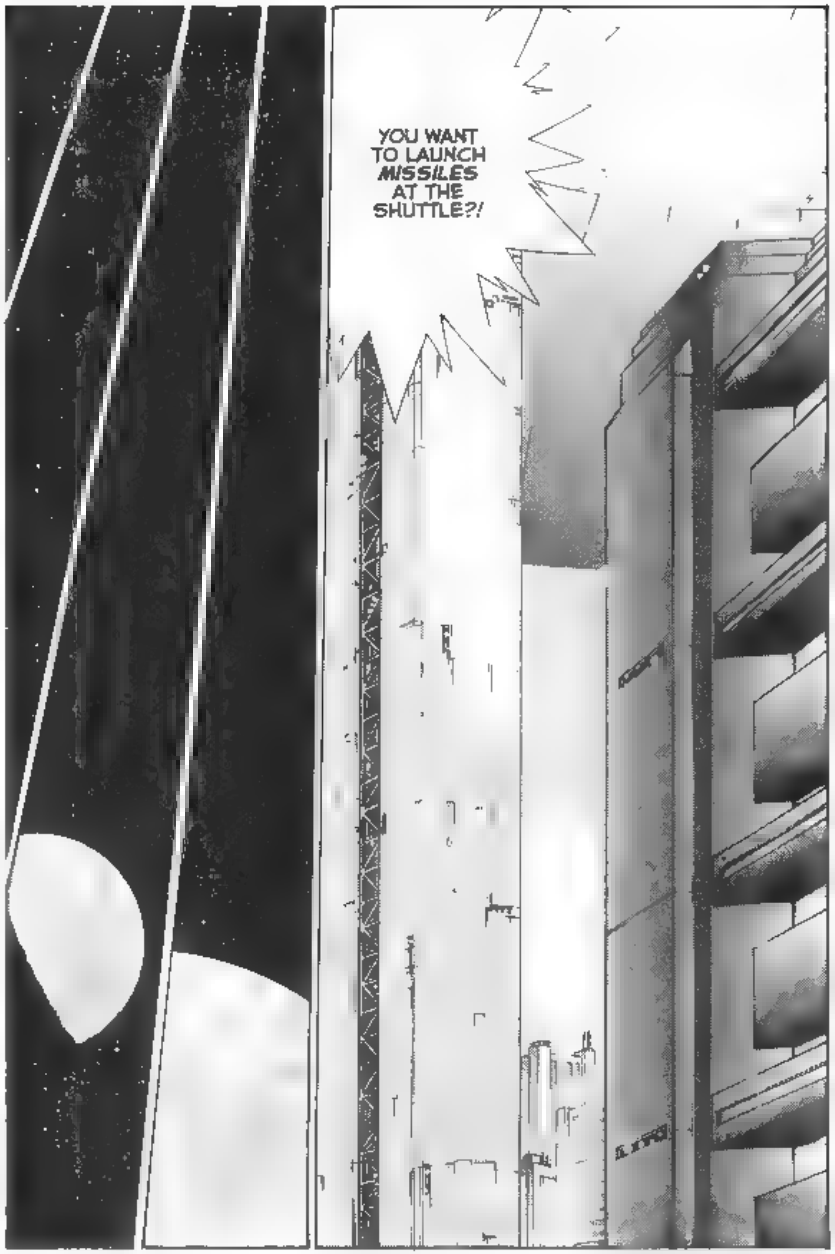
UH, SO... IT'S KINDA LIKE THIS, Y'SEE...
WELL...
...THE POOR OL' PROFESSOR'S BEEN, KINDA, Y'KNOW...
KIDNAPPED!!
HEH
HEH
HEH
SUNAO?
...
OH. I SEE.
H-HEY! DON'T COLD-SHOULDER ME, DARN IT!
GRRR!

I GOT MY PRIDE, Y'KNOW...
WHEW...
REN.
CARE TO EXPLAIN WHERE YOU WENT AFTER ABANDONING YOUR CHARGES...?
KREEK
KREEK
HUH...?
OH, SHUTTLE SECURITY WAS QUESTIONING ME.
CAN'T YOU COME UP WITH A BETTER LIE THAN THAT? NO ONE CAN ARREST OR EVEN DETAIN YOU WITHOUT A U.N. WARRANT.
BEFORE ASSASSINATING HIM, YOU INTENDED TO USE PROFESSOR HEIDEMANN AS A MEANS OF TESTING SUNAO.
THROBB
THROBB

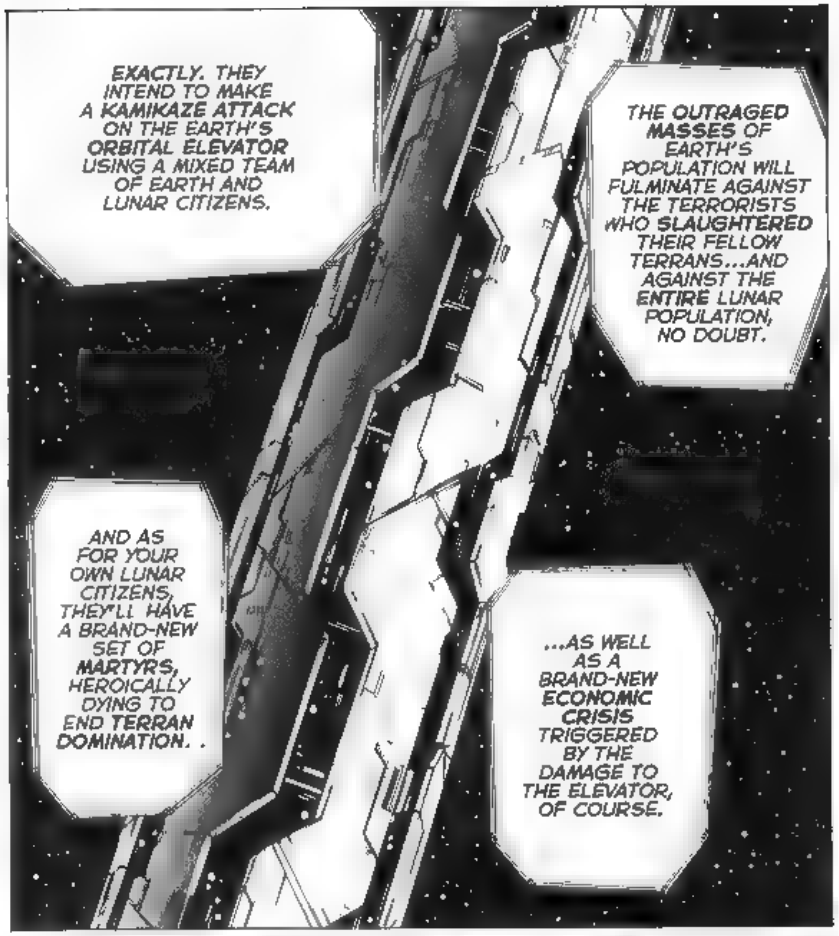

WELL, HEY, WHAT WERE YOU UP TO, MISS HIGH-AND-MIGHTY M-ZAK...?
WELL...
...THAT SERIES OF SHOCKS WE FELT WAS INDEED THE MASS LAUNCHING OF LIFEBOATS.
YES, ALL OF THE LIFEBOATS HAD LAUNCHED, I FOUND...
...EXCEPT ONE...
Lifeboat 4
LAUNCHED
Lifeboat 5
LAUNCHED
LAUNCHED
Lifeboat 9
LAUNCHED
Lifeboat 10
LAUNCHED
Lifeboat 11
LAUNCHED
Lifeboat 12
LAUNCHED

...NAMELY, THE LIFEBOAT THAT KEI HAD ACCIDENTALLY DISABLED... INADVERTENTLY SAVING MY LIFE IN THE PROCESS.
GUESS THAT PRETTY MUCH COVERS IT.
W-WAIT JUST A MINUTE, MISS M-ZAK...
...IF THE LIFEBOATS ARE GONE, THEN WHAT DO THE TERRORISTS INTEND TO DO WITH THE SHUTTLE? THEY CAN'T ESCAPE NOW... CAN THEY?
THEY DON'T INTEND TO ESCAPE... IF THEY'RE PLANNING ON A SUICIDE MISSION TARGETING THE ORBITAL ELEVATOR, THAT IS.

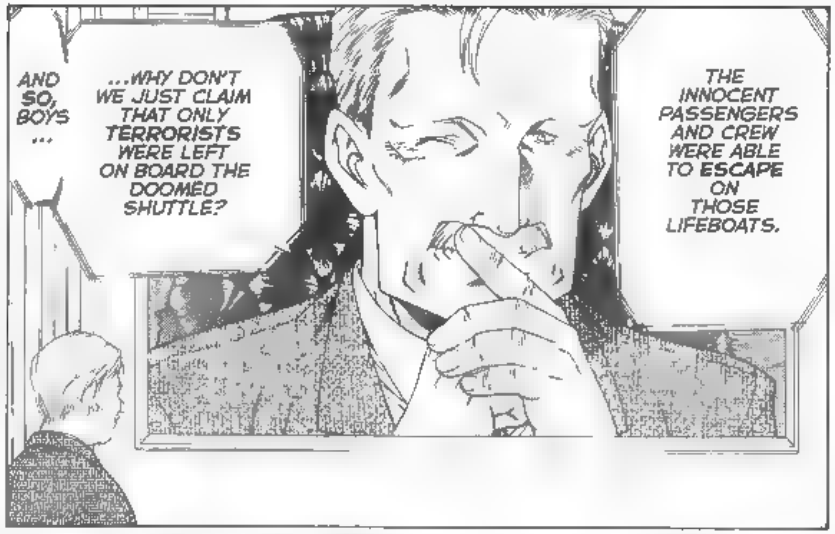

I IMAGINE THAT THE AUTHOR-ITIES...
...WILL CLAIM THAT THIS WAS AN ACCIDENT.


YOU WANT TO LAUNCH MISSILES AT THE SHUTTLE?!

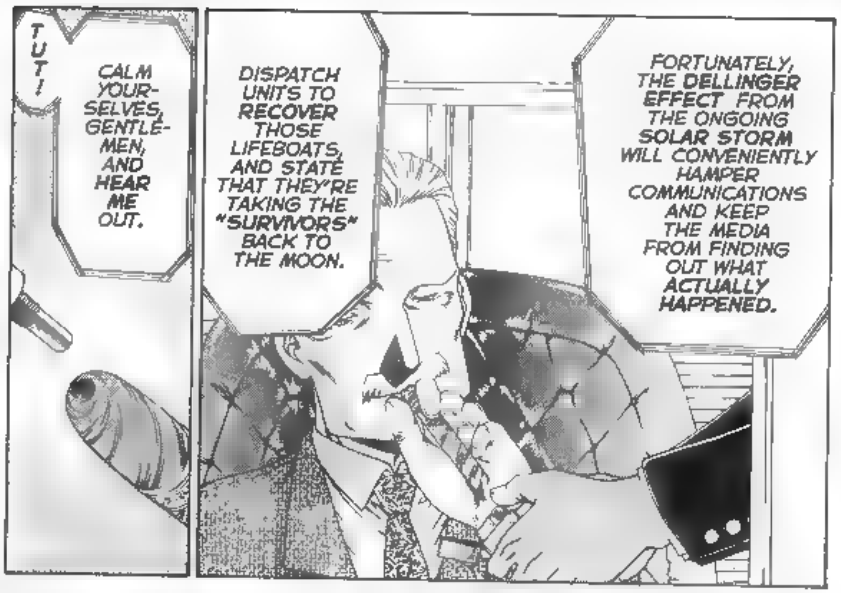
YOU... YOU CAN'T MEAN THIS, SIR!
DEPUTY SECRETARY VISKEIT... THE PUBLIC RELATIONS FALLOUT FROM THE HOSTAGE DEATHS ALONE WOULD BE CATAS-TROPHIC--!
AH, YES, THE HOS-TAGES... HOW VERY INCON-VENIENT.
WORD ABOUT THE LAUNCH OF THE SHUTTLE'S LIFEBOATS IS ALREADY OUT.
OBSER-VATORIES ACROSS THE SYSTEM ARE TRACKING THEM.
THEN... THAT MEANS THAT THE TERRORISTS AREN'T PLANNING TO ATTEMPT AN ESCAPE FROM THE SHUTTLE...?


EXACTLY. THEY INTEND TO MAKE A KAMIKAZE ATTACK ON THE EARTH'S ORBITAL ELEVATOR USING A MIXED TEAM OF EARTH AND LUNAR CITIZENS.
THE OUTRAGED MASSES OF EARTH'S POPULATION WILL FULMINATE AGAINST THE TERRORISTS WHO SLAUGHTERED THEIR FELLOW TERRANS...AND AGAINST THE ENTIRE LUNAR POPULATION, NO DOUBT.
AND AS FOR YOUR OWN LUNAR CITIZENS, THEY'LL HAVE A BRAND-NEW SET OF MARTYRS, HEROICALLY DYING TO END TERRAN DOMINATION. .
...AS WELL AS A BRAND-NEW ECONOMIC CRISIS TRIGGERED BY THE DAMAGE TO THE ELEVATOR, OF COURSE.
BUT MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL...UNTIL THE ELEVATOR IS REPAIRED, THE MOON WILL BE FREE OF ALL DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE EARTH.
THUS, YOUR LUNAR COUNCIL JUST HAPPENS TO SECURE ITS PRIZED GOAL OF "DE FACTO INDEPENDENCE."

WHAT?!
W-WE WOULD NEVER COUNTENANCE SUCH AN ATROCITY!
D-DEPUTY SECRETARY, YOU MUST KNOW THAT--
THERE, THERE... DO CALM DOWN, CHAIRMAN CHIAPAS.
REGARDLESS OF WHO ACTUALLY PLOTTED THIS AUDACIOUS LITTLE STUNT...
HRUM
...THIS OUTRAGEOUS ATTACK ON EARTH'S ECONOMY CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO GO UNPUNISHED.
AS CEO OF DYKSTRA CORPORATION, WOULDN'T YOU AGREE, [redacted] AL-HALIRHA ...?

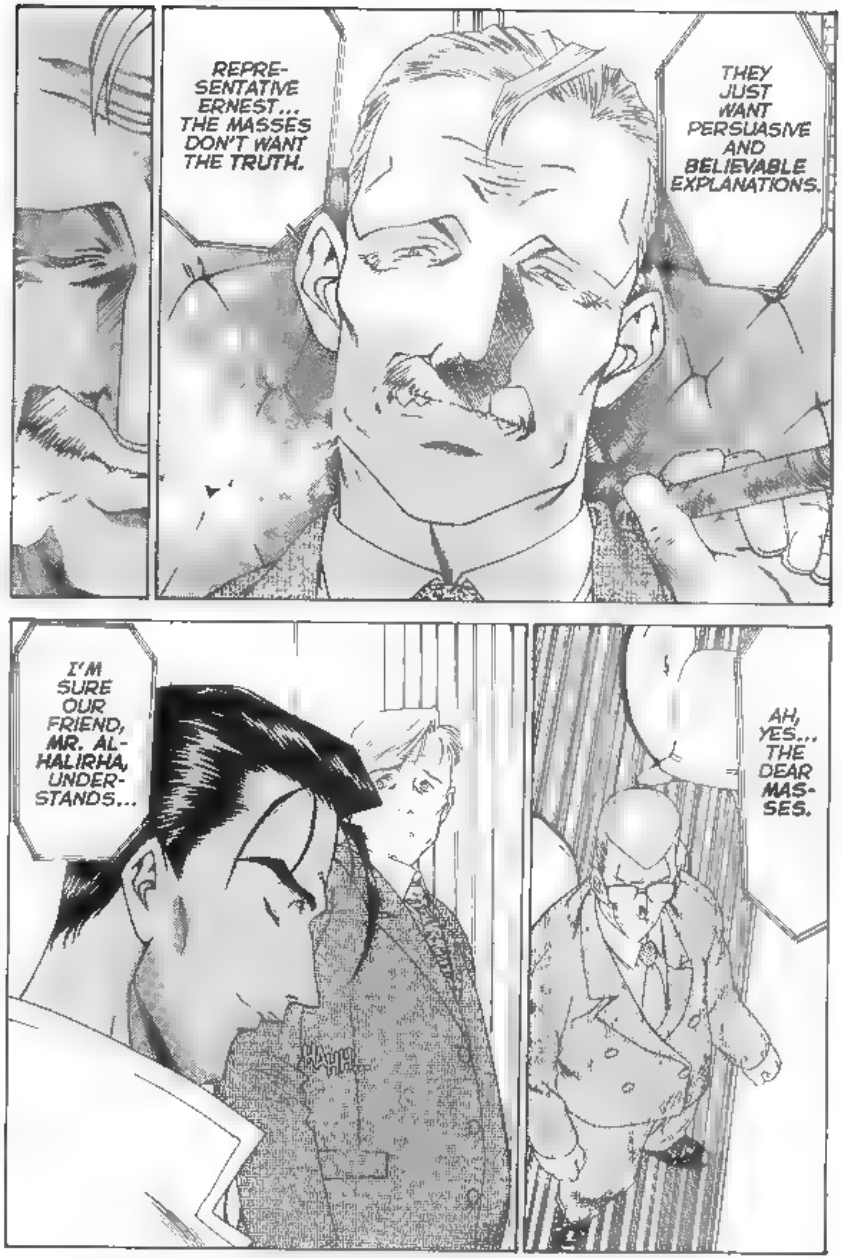

AND SO, BOYS ...
...WHY DON'T WE JUST CLAIM THAT ONLY TERRORISTS WERE LEFT ON BOARD THE DOOMED SHUTTLE?
THE INNOCENT PASSENGERS AND CREW WERE ABLE TO ESCAPE ON THOSE LIFEBOATS.

D-DEPUTY SECRETARY... ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND?!
WE CAN CLAIM ANYTHING WE WANT... BUT THE PUBLIC IS CERTAIN TO FIND OUT THAT NO ONE WAS SAVED!!
A-AND AT A SENSITIVE TIME LIKE THIS...
...IF THE EARTH THREATENS RETALIATION AGAINST OUR LUNAR CITIZENS... THE MOON WILL ERUPT IN RIOTS, SIR!


TUT!
CALM YOURSELVES, GENTLEMEN, AND HEAR ME OUT.
DISPATCH UNITS TO RECOVER THOSE LIFEBOATS, AND STATE THAT THEY'RE TAKING THE "SURVIVORS" BACK TO THE MOON.
FORTUNATELY, THE DELLINGER EFFECT FROM THE ONGOING SOLAR STORM WILL CONVENIENTLY HAMPER COMMUNICATIONS AND KEEP THE MEDIA FROM FINDING OUT WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED.

IF FAMILY MEMBERS ASK ABOUT ANYONE ON THE PASSENGER ROSTER, CLAIM THAT THEIR RELATIVES WERE KILLED BY THE HIJACKERS... OR WERE TERRORISTS THEMSELVES.
YOU MIGHT EVEN PRODUCE PASSENGERS, WITHOUT QUERULOUS FAMILIES OR OTHER CONNECTIONS, AS MIRACULOUS EXAMPLES OF "SURVIVAL AGAINST ALL ODDS"... WITH YOUR OWN HANDPICKED PEOPLE PLAYING THE PARTS.
THIS ...
THIS IS OUTRAGEOUS, DEPUTY SECRETARY! WE CANNOT--
OF COURSE WE CAN, CHAIRMAN... AND I'M CERTAIN THAT YOUR OUTRAGE WILL BE QUELLED BY WHAT I'M ABOUT TO PROPOSE.

NOW, GRANTING THE MOON ABSOLUTE INDEPENDENCE WOULD BE, SHALL WE SAY... POLITICALLY UNTENABLE FOR US.
BUT ABOUT THAT SLATE OF LESS DRAMATIC CONDITIONS FOR PARTIAL AUTONOMY YOU PRESENTED, VIA OUR YOUNG REPRESENTATIVE ERNEST HERE...
...WE'RE PREPARED TO ACCEPT THOSE CONDITIONS, CHAIRMAN.
SO THAT'S HOW YOU PLAN TO SQUELCH ANY PROTESTS FROM THE MOON'S POPULATION... BUY THEM OFF WITH A DECLARATION OF PARTIAL INDEPENDENCE?
THEN, IN TURN, YOU'LL PACIFY THE LUNAR CITIZENS AGAINST THE COMING BLACKOUTS, PARALYZED INTERPLANETARY TRANSPORTION, AND OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE RESULTING ECONOMIC DISASTER JUST BY WAVING THE LUNAR FLAG...?


REPRESENTATIVE ERNEST... THE MASSES DON'T WANT THE TRUTH.
THEY JUST WANT PERSUASIVE AND BELIEVABLE EXPLANATIONS.
I'M SURE OUR FRIEND, MR. ALHALIRHA, UNDERSTANDS...
HA-HA!
AH, YES... THE DEAR MASSES.

THEY DON'T WANT TO LEARN, TO DISCOVER THE TRUTH...TO FORMULATE ANY OPINIONS OF THEIR
YET THEY ALWAYS DEMAND SOME PERFECT SOLUTION FROM THEIR LEADERS.
WELL, IT'S OUR DUTY, BOYS... WE'LL HAVE TO GIVE THEM THE BEST PERFECTION THAT MONEY CAN BUY.
END OF STORY.
YES... I SEE.
SKEEEK
I UNDER-STAND, SIR.
BUT, SIR ...!
YOU MUST GIVE US JUST A LITTLE MORE TIME!

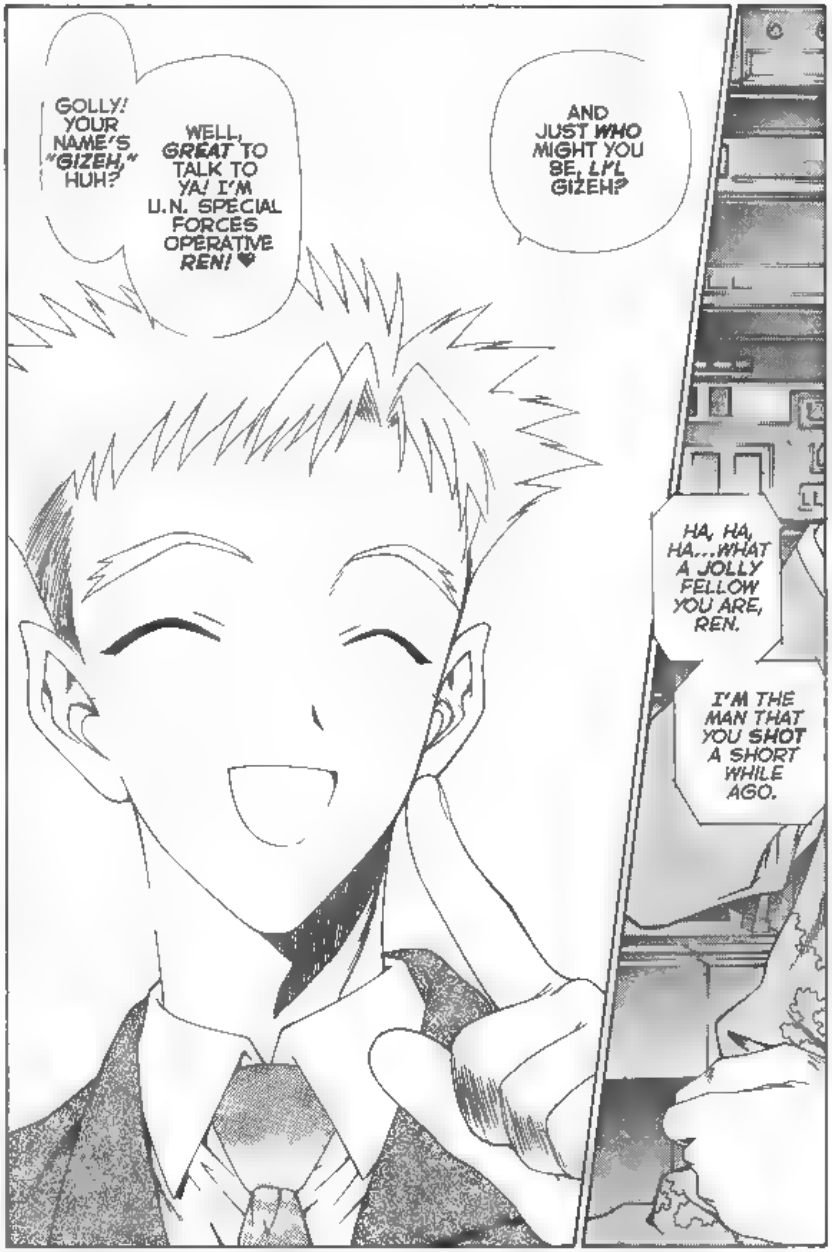
AFTER ALL, TWO OF OUR BEST OPERATIVES ARE ABOARD THAT SHUTTLE!
WE HAVE TO GIVE THEM AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEAL WITH THE TERRORISTS!
PLEASE, HOLD OFF ON LAUNCHING THE MISSILES UNTIL THE VERY LAST MOMENT, SIR!
FINE. WHY NOT?

UNTIL THEN, GENTLE-MEN--
HAAH..
KCHINGG

UM... WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "ACCIDENT," MISS M-ZAK...?
WITH A SUFFICIENTLY DESTRUCTIVE CATASTROPHE, NO ONE WILL QUESTION WHY PROFESSOR HEIDEMANN'S BODY WASN'T RECOVERED.
WITH THIS SHUTTLE BLOWN TO BITS, ALL KEY EVIDENCE WILL BE SCATTERED THROUGH SPACE AND FUNCTIONALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO RETRIEVE
THE DELLINGER EFFECT IS CURRENTLY IN FULL FORCE... MEANING THAT WE CAN'T TRANSMIT ANY INCONVENIENT SIGNALS THAT MIGHT CONTRADICT THE OFFICIAL STORY.
MAAASTERFUL DEDUCTION, MILADY!
THAT'S WHY THEY DUMPED ALL THE LIFEBOATS, RIGHT? SO NO INOPPORTUNE REPORTS COULD SURVIVE THIS DISASTER...
...AND THEY'VE ALREADY SECURED THE PROFESSOR...
...SO THEY JUST NEED TO DISPOSE OF THE EVIDENCE!

HEY, TERRORISTAS! YOU'RE EAVES-DROPPING ON US, AREN'T YOU? WELL, WE GET THE DAMNED PICTURE, OKAY?
SO START THE NEGOTIAT-IONS, ALREADY!
?
?
I'LL GET IT! I'LL GET IT!!
KLUNKK
HELLOOO! ROOM A106 SPEAKING!
SORRY TO INCONVE-NIENCE YOU.
MY NAME IS GIZEH.

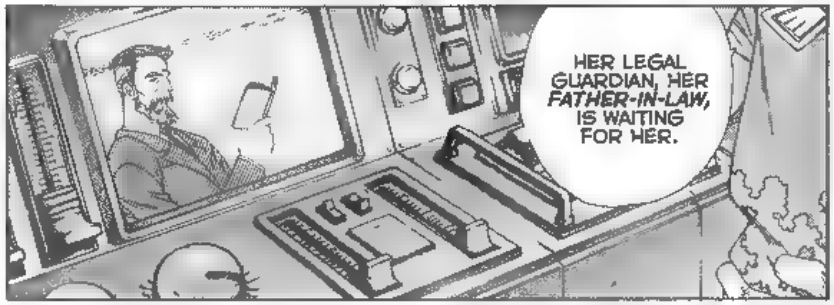
Act 64


GOLLY! YOUR NAME'S "GIZEH," HUH?
WELL, GREAT TO TALK TO YA! I'M U.N. SPECIAL FORCES OPERATIVE REN! ♥
AND JUST WHO MIGHT YOU BE, LI'L GIZEH?
HA, HA, HA...WHAT A JOLLY FELLOW YOU ARE, REN.
I'M THE MAN THAT YOU SHOT A SHORT WHILE AGO.

OUCH! NOW, THAT'S EMBARRASSING! KINDA RUDE OF ME, HUH?
BUT Y'KNOW WHAT, GIZEH? THAT STILL DOESN'T REALLY TELL ME MUCH ABOUT YOU...
SKRCHH
SKRCHH
NO, I IMAGINE THAT IT DOESN'T... WOULD THE TERM "FREELANCE TERRORIST" CLARIFY MATTERS FOR YOU?
OH, ALSO...
...UP UNTIL SEVERAL DAYS AGO, I WAS AFFILIATED WITH THE DISSIDENT LUNAR LIBERATION COUNCIL AS A... CONSULTANT.
DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH, "GIZEH!" AS IF SOME MOB OF INCOMPETENT, UNTRAINED LUNAR EXTREMIST THUGS COULD'VE PULLED OFF THIS HIJACKING!
A CONSULTANT, HUH? D'YOU GET BENNIES AS A--
NNGH
WE KNOW EXACTLY WHICH CORPORATION YOU'RE WITH, ALL RIGHT? STATE YOUR DEMANDS, NOW!
FMPP

COME, NOW...AS IF YOU DON'T ALREADY *KNOW,* MISS M·ZAK

WE'D LIKE YOU TO TURN MISS KEI HEIDEMANN OVER TO US.

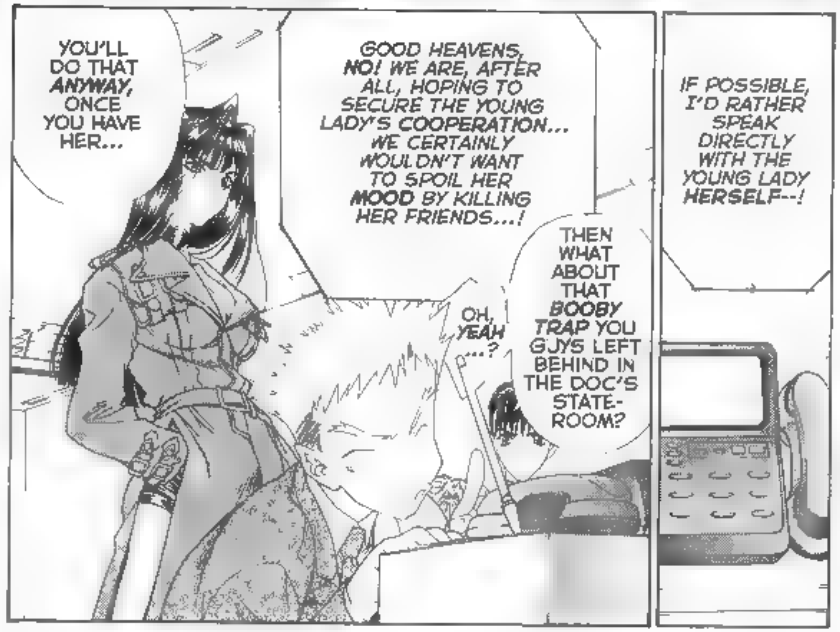

HER LEGAL GUARDIAN, HER *FATHER-IN-LAW,* IS WAITING FOR HER.

SHPPP

KEI?

AND IF WE SAY *NO* ...?

THEN, REGRETTABLY, THIS SHUTTLE WILL COLLIDE WITH THE SHAFT OF THE EARTH'S ORBITAL ELEVATOR.
ALAS, A NON-SCIENTIST SUCH AS MYSELF CAN ONLY SPECULATE AS TO THE MASSIVE CASUALTIES THAT WOULD BE INFLICTED BY ELEVATOR AND SHUTTLE FRAGMENTS CRASHING TO THE EARTH...


YOU'LL DO THAT ANYWAY, ONCE YOU HAVE HER...
GOOD HEAVENS, NO! WE ARE, AFTER ALL, HOPING TO SECURE THE YOUNG LADY'S COOPERATION... WE CERTAINLY WOULDN'T WANT TO SPOIL HER MOOD BY KILLING HER FRIENDS...!
OH, YEAH...?
THEN WHAT ABOUT THAT BOOBY TRAP YOU GUYS LEFT BEHIND IN THE DOC'S STATE-ROOM?
IF POSSIBLE, I'D RATHER SPEAK DIRECTLY WITH THE YOUNG LADY HERSELF--!

!
... ... UM ...
IS THIS THE RENOWNED MISS KEI HEIDEMANN?
IT'S AN HONOR TO MEET YOU!
MY NAME IS GIZEH, MISS... GIZEH SAUS.
KSHHH
YMMM

SO...I GATHER THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION ...?
YES...
IT'S TERRIBLY UNFORTUNATE THAT THINGS TURNED OUT THIS WAY...
...BUT FOR THE GOOD OF ALL LUNAR MANKIND ...
...WE DESPERATELY NEED YOUR COOPERATION, MISS HEIDEMANN.
OH, MAN... CHEEEEZY!
YOUR FATHER-IN-LAW HAS ALREADY JOINED US.
WHAT DO YOU SAY?
IF YOU WISH, I'M SURE THAT WE COULD ACCOMMODATE YOUR BOYFRIEND AS WELL...

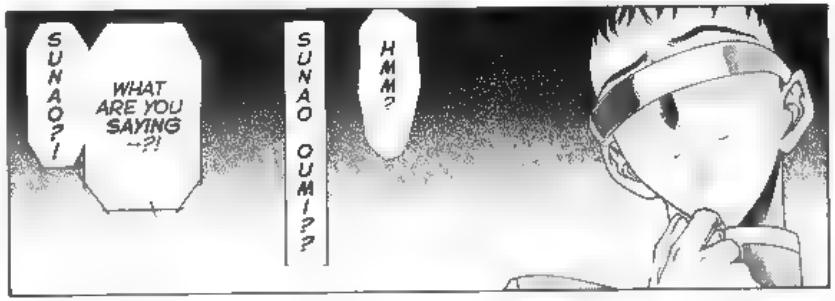
BUT... BUT WHAT ABOUT ATTIM AND THE OTHERS ...?
WHOA, I, ARE YOU NEGO-TIATING WITH THEM YOUR-SELF ...?
I'M TRULY SORRY, BUT U.N. COM-BATANTS WOULD POSE FAR TOO GREAT A SECURITY RISK FOR US--
BOO! SEE THE DIS-CRIMI-NA-TION!
BOOOO!
BUT FOR THEIR INTERFERENCE IN THE FIRST PLACE, WE COULD HAVE AVOIDED THESE VILE NEGOTIATIONS ENTIRELY... A PITY.
SIGH
SHIFT RE-SPON-SIBILITY TO US-- WILL YA?
HNRG

I ... I ...
I D-DON'T KNOW... I C-CAN'T ...
YOU CAN SEE WHAT SHAPE SHE'S IN, CAN'T YOU? WHATEVER HER ULTIMATE DECISION WILL BE...
...SHE NEEDS MORE TIME TO MAKE IT.
... ... I UNDERSTAND, MISS M-ZAK. IN THAT CASE, I WILL BE BACK IN TOUCH SOON.
I...I'M SORRY, EVERY-ONE ...!

I'M ALWAYS COUNTING ON *YOU* GUYS TO HELP ME...
...BUT WHEN IT'S FINALLY UP TO *ME* TO DO SOME-THING--
YOU *MUSTN'T* BLAME YOUR-SELF, DEAR.
YOUR FATHER-IN-LAW'S BEEN *KIDNAPPED*... IT'S *NATURAL* THAT YOU'D BE DISTRAUGHT.
PLEASE, *DRY* THOSE TEARS, KEI.
AFTER ALL, THERE'S NO REASON THAT YOU *SHOULDN'T* GO WITH THEM!
SUNAO?!

ACT 65

PLEASE, DRY THOSE TEARS, KEI.
AFTER ALL, THERE'S NO REASON THAT YOU SHOULDN'T GO WITH THEM!


SUNAO?!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING ~?!
SUNAO OUMI??
HMM?

YOU DO UNDERSTAND WHAT HANDING KEI OVER TO THEM MEANS, DON'T YOU?
?
SHH...
UNLIKE YOU, MISS M-ZAK, WE AREN'T U.N. OPERATIVES, ARE WE...?

AND SINCE THEY NEED KEI, THEY SURELY WON'T HARM HER, WILL THEY...?
AH...

I GET IT!
SUNAO!
HUH ...?
SLAPP
PERVERT!
SLAPP
KSHHH
OWW!!
POOR GUY... THAT'S GOTTA HURT!

"PERVERT" ...? WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT?
HAHH? THAT SOUND... IS IT STATIC?
KSHH ..... KSHHH
DID WE JUST LOSE THE AUDIO FEED ...?
THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO EAVESDROP ON US NOW, AT LEAST...
I... I'M SO SORRY ...!
ER... THAT WAS MY FAULT, AFTER ALL...
HA HA..
I AM IMPRESSED THAT YOU REMEMBERED THE SIGNAL SCRAMBLER, SUNAO...
YEAH! GREAT JOB FOR A BEGINNER, KID!
WHOOSH

BUT WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO *NOW* ...?
W-WELL... IN *MY* OPINION ...
...I THINK IT WOULD BE BEST IF WE *RESCUED* DOCTOR HEIDEMANN AND RETURNED TO EARTH *TOGETHER.*
S-SUNAO... THANK YOU SO *MUCH!*
HKK
SOBB
SOBB

UM... NOT THAT I HAVE ANY SPECIFIC IDEAS AS TO *HOW* TO DO SO...!
NEH.
HEE, HEE...
THEN *MAY* I SUPPLY SOME *SPECIFICS?*

KSHHHH
HUH
ALL THE SURVEILLANCE GEAR STOPPED TRANSMITTING AT THE SAME TIME...?
SO, GIZEH... NOW YOU'RE TRYING THE CONCILIATORY APPROACH?
DISAPPOINTING BEHAVIOR ON MY PART, ISN'T IT? BUT WITHOUT OUR MR. STRAY ON HAND, TAKING A HARD-LINE APPROACH IS SIMPLY TOO RISKY.
NONETHELESS, I'M HOPING TO BUY ENOUGH TIME TO COMPLETE THE ORBITAL CORRECTION.
NOW, HEAD FOR THE CONTROL ROOM, WON'T YOU? I NEED YOU TO COLLECT THAT REWRITTEN NAVIGATION DISK AND ENSURE THAT THIS SHUTTLE'S COLLISION COURSE CAN'T BE ALTERED...
OUR FOES AREN'T STUPID, AFTER ALL.

THEY'LL BE HERE ALL TOO SOON...
HMFF!
THANKS FOR ANOTHER CRAPPY JOB, BOSS...
WHOA...!
FWMPP

STRAY?!
WHAT...? STOP YAMMERING, WILL YA?
I'VE GOT A DAMN HEADACHE, OKAY...?
YOU'RE STILL ALIVE...?

SO IS ATTIM M-ZAK! I GUESS A TOP-LEVEL OPERATIVE WAS TOO MUCH FOR YOU TO HANDLE, WASN'T SHE?
SHADDUP!
MY EARS ARE RINSING WITH YOUR BLABBERING...
YOU REALLY ARE ALL WASHED UP, AREN'T YOU?
STUPID BRAT, TWEETING AWAY LIKE YA KNOW ANYTHING ...
WHISH

I SAID, SHUT UP!!
BLAMM

ACT 66

PLEASE TAKE GOOD CARE OF ME

AAA
SHLUKK

MMM...
HAAAAHHH...
OH, YEAH... THIS FEELS SOOO DAMN GOOD, Y'KNOW.
GOTTA LOVE IT... THE RECOIL, THE SPATTER, THE SWEET SMELL OF BLOOD AND GUNPOWDER...
SNFF
MFF...

THAT'S MORE LIKE IT... MY HEAD'S FINALLY CLEARING UP...
WH-- WHY?
WHAT'S THAT? YOU ASKING ME "WHY," KIDDO?
'CAUSE I HATE STUCK-UP LITTLE BRATS LIKE YOU...AND IT WON'T MATTER IF YOU GET SNUFFED RIGHT NOW. YOU'RE JUST A MESSENGER BOY...AS IN, NOT CRITICAL TO THE MISSION.

I WAS PLANNING TO KILL YOU IN THE MIDDLE OF SOME CONVENIENT, COMBAT-RELATED CHAOS ANYWAY... MY OPPORTUNITY JUST HAPPENED TO ARRIVE A BIT EARLIER THAN ANTICIPATED.
D-DAMN YOU...
ANNGH

HEY.
MY, MY! THAT'S ONE SWEET EXPRESSION ON YOUR PRETTY L'L FACE, K.D. ♥
YOU'RE TURNING ME ON...
SHMPP

...BIG TIME.
♥
GK-K
WHH
DD
C'MON, LEMME HEAR S MORE OF THAT CUTE SINGING VOICE OF YOURS
NOW!
WHAMM
SLPP

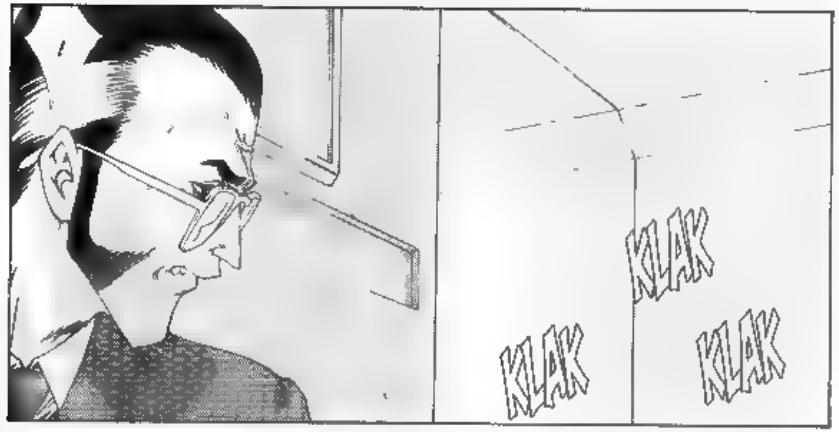
GYAAAA
AAAAAA

HEY, HEY.
YOU REALLY GOT ME RUNNIN' HOT, KIDDO.
HERE'S YOUR REWARD, OKAY?
BLAMM

PAK
SPLCHH
GMMFF
SHLUPP
NNHHHHHHMM
SHLPP

OH, YEAH. . . THAT'S THE STUFF
NOTHING TASTES BETTER THAN SOMEONE ELSE'S PAIN!

KCHK
SEE YA, KID.
GONNA SPLASH MY SEED ALL OVER YOUR DEAD BODY... ENJOY!
HEE HEE HEE
SLAHH
KLAK KLAK KLAK


KLAK
KLAK
KLAK

DAMN!
FWAPP

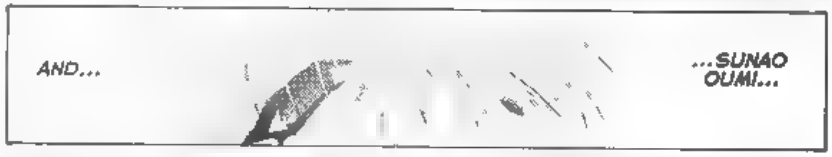
WHOA!
AH!
GYEEK!!
LOOK, HE'S STILL *BREATHING!* HE'S *ALIVE!*
(NNG)
THE BULLETS MISSED ANY *VITAL ORGANS*, BUT HIS BLOOD LOSS IS *TERRIBLE*... WE NEED TO GET HIM TO THE *MEDICAL WARD* NOW!

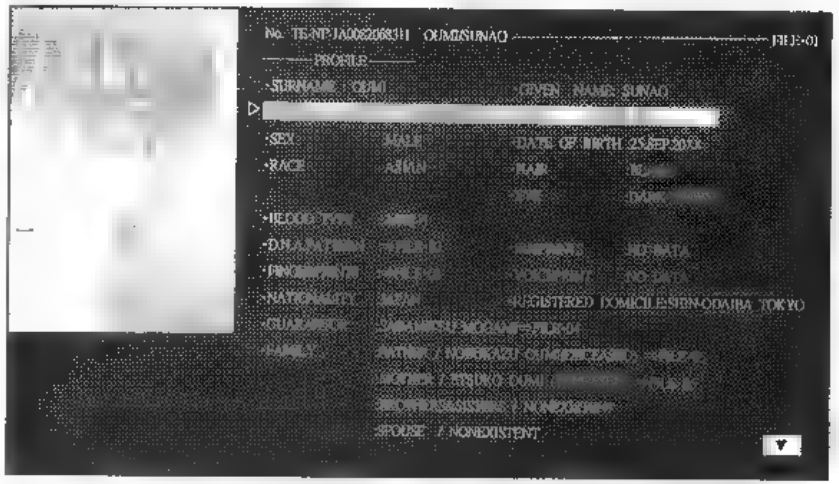
SORRY, BUT THAT *WON'T* BE POSSIBLE.
WHAT? WHY *NOT?* HE MIGHT *DIE* IF WE LEAVE HIM HERE!
WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF A *MISSION*, HERE! WE DON'T KNOW *WHEN* THE HELL WE'RE GONNA BE *ATTACKED!* WE DON'T HAVE *TIME* TO BABYSIT SOME INJURED KID!
NOT TO MENTION THAT THE *MEDICAL WARD'S* LOCATED ON THE *OPPOSITE SIDE* OF THE DAMN SHUTTLE, OKAY? *NOW* DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
NO. I *DON'T* UNDER-STAND!

UM.
UH.
WHAT?
HRK
WE WERE JUST GONNA GO HIDE IN THAT *LIFEBOAT* ANYWAY, SO IT WON'T MATTER IF WE'RE A LITTLE *LATE* GETTING THERE, WILL IT?
SO WHY DON'T WE HIDE IN THIS STATEROOM AND *TREAT* HIM, WHILE YOU AND MISS M-ZAK *COMPLETE THE MISSION,* REN?
THNKK
THNKK
WELL, I DUNNO IF--
OOPS.
HMPF
.....OKAY!!
SKRITCH
SKRITCH
JUST *PLEASE* DON'T GO AND *GET CAUGHT,* ALL RIGHT?

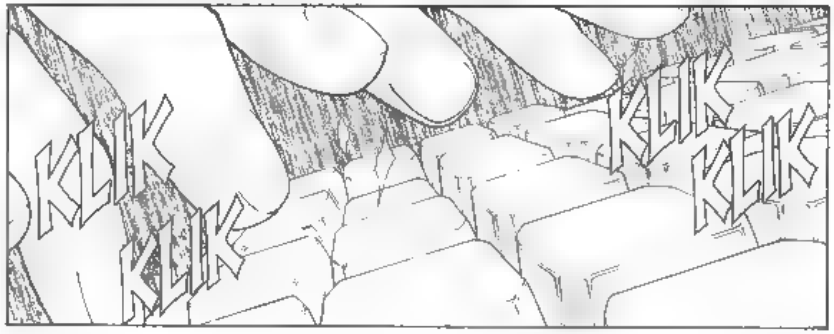
AH, *EXCUSE ME,* BUT. .
...ALL I CAN *DO* FOR HIM HERE IS STOP HIS *BLEEDING.* I'LL NEED SOME *ANTISEPTIC* AND *PAIN KILLERS,* AT LEAST, OR ELSE HE MIGHT, WELL...
IS HE IN *SERIOUS DANGER* ...?
THAT DEPENDS ON HOW MUCH *STRENGTH* HE HAS LEFT, I'M AFRAID...
I THINK THERE WAS A *MEDICAL KIT* BACK IN THE LIFEBOAT!
THAT'S NOT *TOO* FAR FROM HERE, SO I'LL GO GET IT...
YES! LET'S GO FIND *IT,* SUNAO!
WHAT? YOU WANT TO *COME ALONG,* KEI?

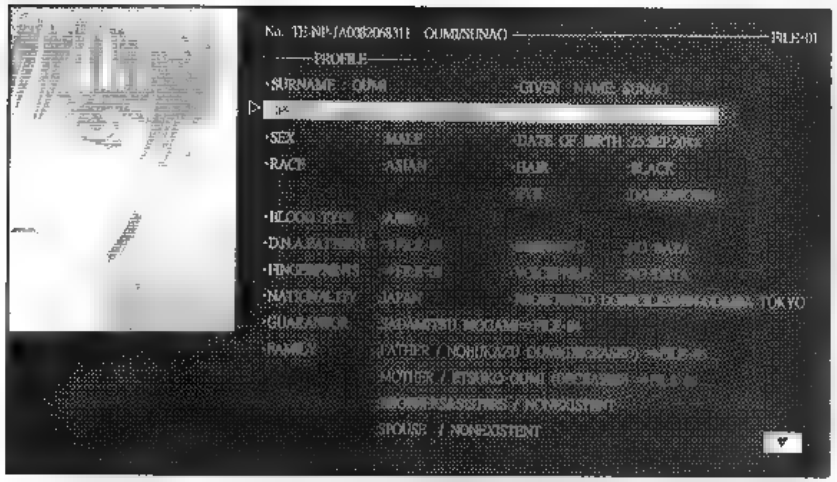
I DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT WHAT THE BAD GUYS WANT IS ME, RIGHT? SO IF YOU'RE WITH ME, THEY PROBABLY WON'T START SHOOTING AT US, WILL THEY?
KEI HEIDEMANN!
BUT... EVEN SO, KEI...
CLOSED

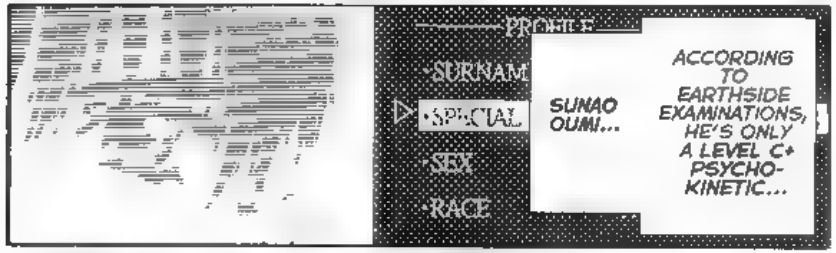

AND...
...SUNAO OUMI...


PROFILE
SURNAME: OUMI
GIVEN NAME: SUNAO
SEX:
RACE:
REGISTERED DOMICILE:SHIBUYA TOKYO
SPOUSE / NONEXISTENT

ACT 67


KLIK
KLIK
KLIK
KLIK


PROFILE
·SURNAME
·GIVEN NAME: SUNAO
·SEX
·RACE
·ASIAN
·HAIR
·BLACK
·EYE
·BLOOD TYPE
·DNA PATTERN
·FINGERPRINTS
·NATIONALITY
·JAPAN
·GUARDIAN
·FAMILY
·FATHER / NOBUKAZU OUMI
·MOTHER / ETSUKO OUMI
·SIBLINGS / NONEXISTENT
·SPOUSE / NONEXISTENT


PROFILE
·SURNAM
·SPECIAL
·SEX
·RACE
SUNAO OUMI...
ACCORDING TO EARTHSIDE EXAMINATIONS, HE'S ONLY A LEVEL C+ PSYCHO-KINETIC...

...BUT THAT POWER...
...THE METATALENT HE USED TO DAMAGE NUMBER FOUR...

...EVEN IF HIS PSYCHO-KINETIC ABILITIES HAD INCREASED...
...THAT ATTACK USED A LEVEL OF METATALENT POWER FAR BEYOND ANYTHING A HUMAN COULD WIELD AT THIS STAGE!

IT'S DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT KEI'S POWERS ALONE COULD HAVE CAUSED THAT PHENOM-ENON.

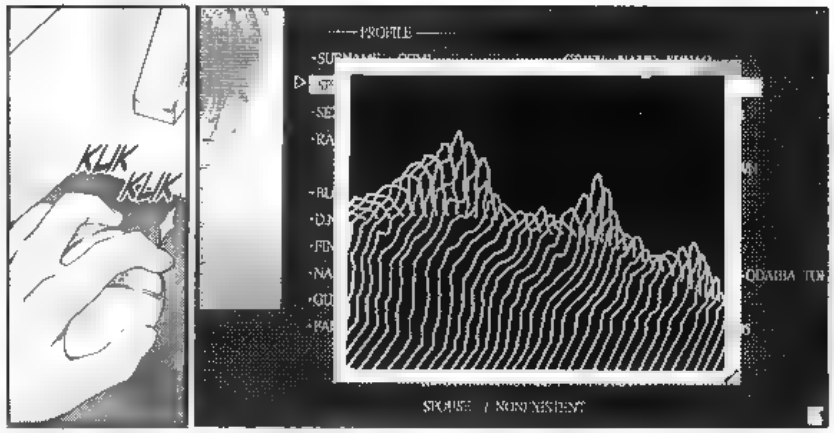
AND SO...

...THAT IMPLIES THAT SUNAO OUMI'S POWERS WERE INVOLVED AS WELL.

NUMBER TWO AND NUMBER THREE WERE HEAVILY DAMAGED, AND [redacted] FOUR REMAINS MISSING.

EVEN [redacted] FIVE, WHICH WASN'T DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE FIGHTING, WAS SOMEHOW SHUT DOWN.

COULD A NATURALLY DEVELOPING ESPER EVEN DO ANY OF THAT...?
AND ACCOMPLISH THOSE FEATS WHILE SIMULTA-NEOUSLY RESTRAINING THE POWER SURGES OF AN OUT-OF-CONTROL "SEEDER" LIKE KEI...?



INDEED, ACCORDING TO NUMBER FOUR'S SCANS...

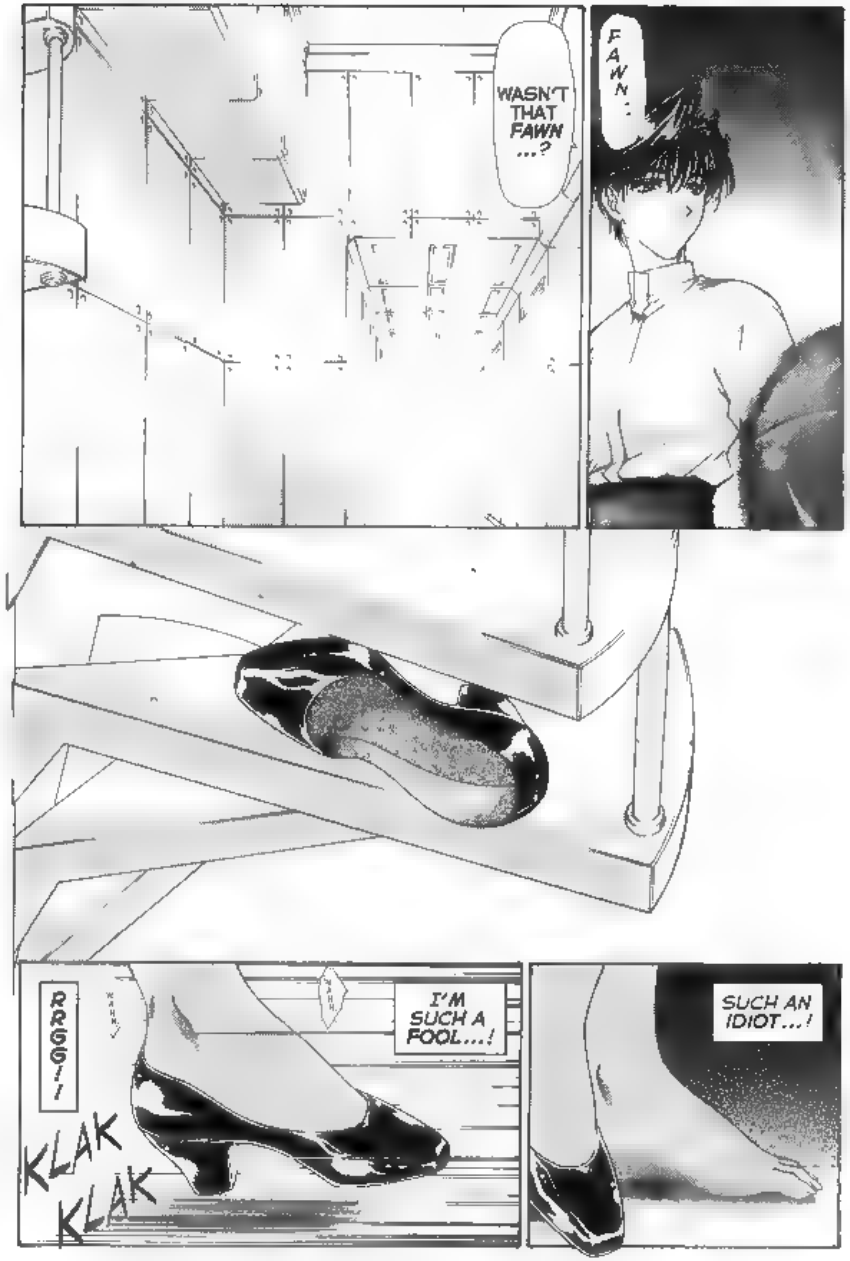
...READINGS SIMILAR TO THOSE OF A SEEDER WERE DETECTED FROM SUNAO OUMI.

BUT IT'S CLEAR THAT HE'S NOT A SEEDER... THEN WHY...?

IT'S ME, FAWN... I'M COMING IN, SIR.
OH...
DIRECTOR HEIDEMANN? APEP?
ARE YOU HERE...?
HMF!
WELL, I'LL JUST LEAVE THE DOCUMENTS ON HIS DESK, THEN...
.....
SUCH A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN!
IT'S ONLY BEEN ONE YEAR SINCE SHE DIED...
APEP STILL WOULDN'T...
...HE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO... FORGET HER, WOULD HE...? OF COURSE NOT...
WHY COULDN'T HE HAVE MET ME BEFORE HE MET HER...?
TSK!!
AAARGH!!
STUPID, STUPID... WHAT ARE YOU THINKING, YOU IDIOT?
EEEK!
BONK
BONK

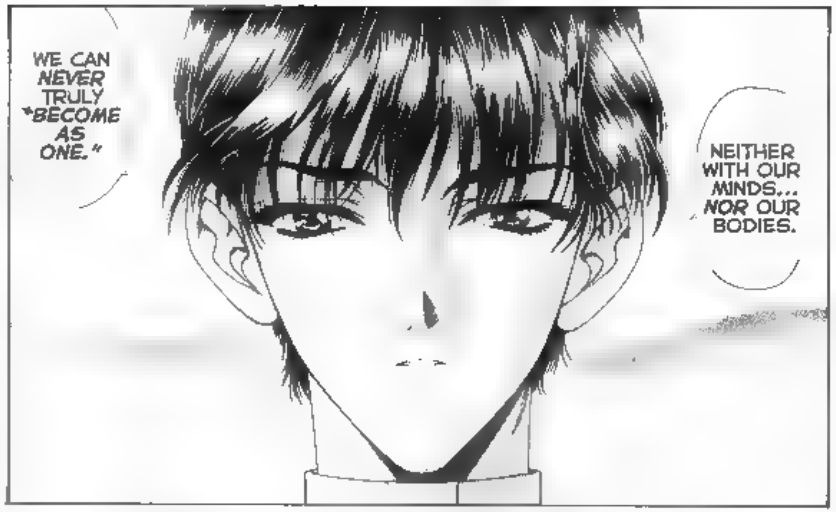
ACT 68

--THEN GIVE THIS DATA TO DR. BROWN IN LAB SIX.
YES, SIR!
WHY AM I HIDING LIKE THIS...?
OH, BY THE WAY, DIRECTOR HEIDEMANN... WOULD YOU CARE TO GO OUT TO DINNER WITH ME TOMORROW NIGHT...?
TERRIBLY SORRY, MY DEAR, BUT I HAVE TO SUBMIT A NUMBER OF EXECUTIVE REPORTS TO HEADQUARTERS TOMORROW NIGHT, SO...
REALLY? OH, THAT'S TOO BAD...
KLAK KLAK KLAK
HMM?


WASN'T THAT FAWN...?
FAWN!
I'M SUCH A FOOL...!
RRGG!!
KLAK KLAK
SUCH AN IDIOT...!

SO SILLY OF ME... I HAVEN'T EVEN TOLD APEP HOW I FEEL...
SO WHAT? GIVES ME THE RIGHT TO AGONIZE OVER WHO HE MIGHT LIKE, WHO HE MIGHT BE DATING...?
IT'S SO RIDICULOUS, GETTING EXHILARATED OR DEPRESSED OVER SUCH SCHOOLGIRL OBSESSIONS
WHAT'S THE POINT IN WORRYING ABOUT HIS FEELINGS, WHEN I'M NOT ENTIRELY SURE ABOUT MY OWN...?
WE'VE COME SO FAR... LITERALLY, TO THE MOON...BUT WE HUMANS ARE STILL SUCH VICTIMS OF OUR EMOTIONS...!

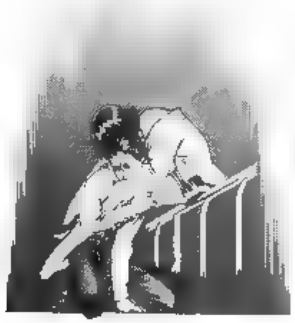
APEP...?
YES?
WHY AREN'T HUMANS ABLE TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER...?
WE'RE SO LOST AND FORLORN WHEN WE'RE ALONE...
...SO WHY CAN'T WE BECOME ONE WITH EACH OTHER...?
SOME FEELINGS CAN BE EXPRESSED TO ANOTHER PERSON...
...AND THERE MAY WELL BE TIMES WHEN WE CAN UNDERSTAND ONE OTHER.
BUT...
BUT...?


WE CAN NEVER TRULY "BECOME AS ONE."
NEITHER WITH OUR MINDS... NOR OUR BODIES.

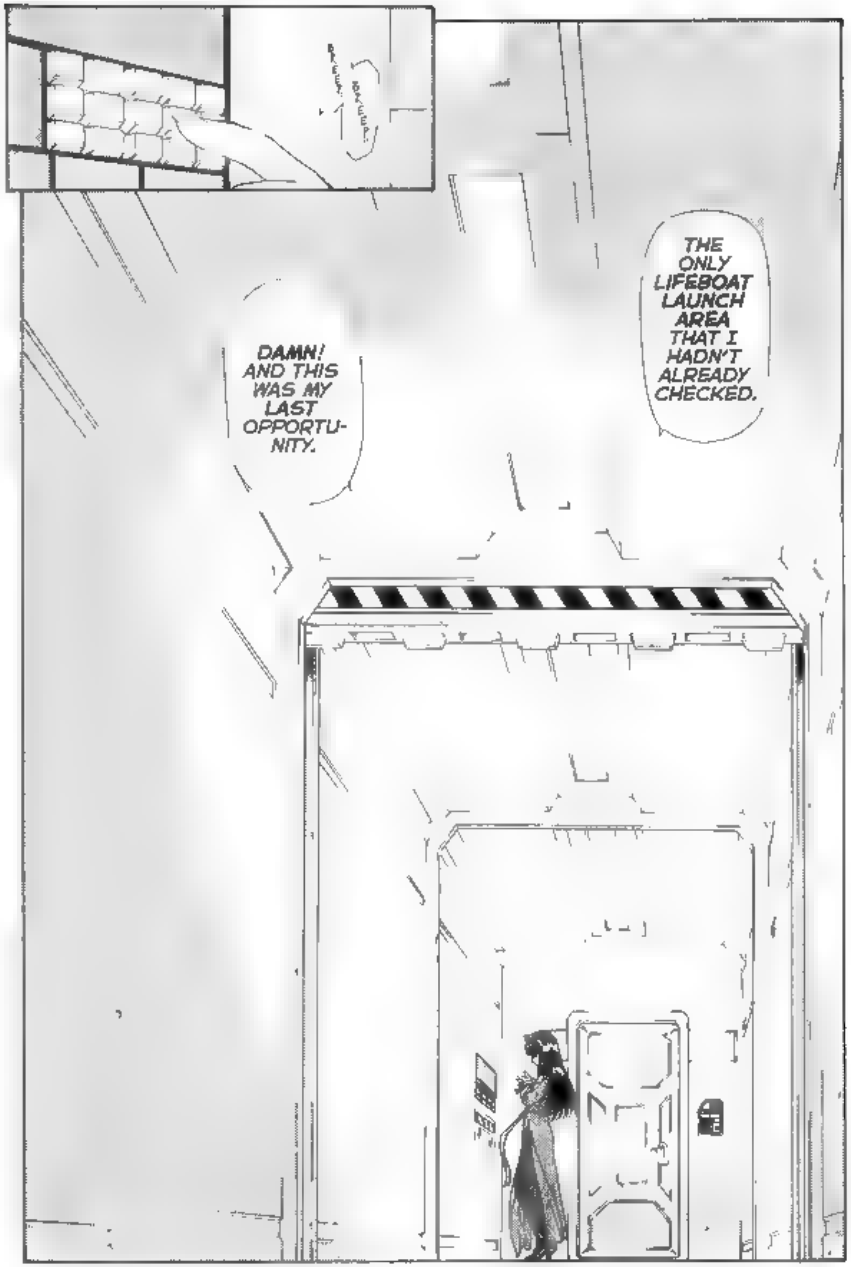
AND YET WE STILL YEARN FOR TRUE CONTACT WITH EACH OTHER
AND SO...
...THAT'S WHY WE WISH TO TOUCH ONE ANOTHER, DON'T YOU THINK?
NOW, THEN... IS THIS YOUR SHOE, MY PRINCESS?

HEE, HEE
SO THAT'S WHY...
FMPP
BECAUSE, IN THE END...
...WE CAN'T BE AS ONE.
THAT'S WHY WE WANT TO TOUCH ONE ANOTHER.

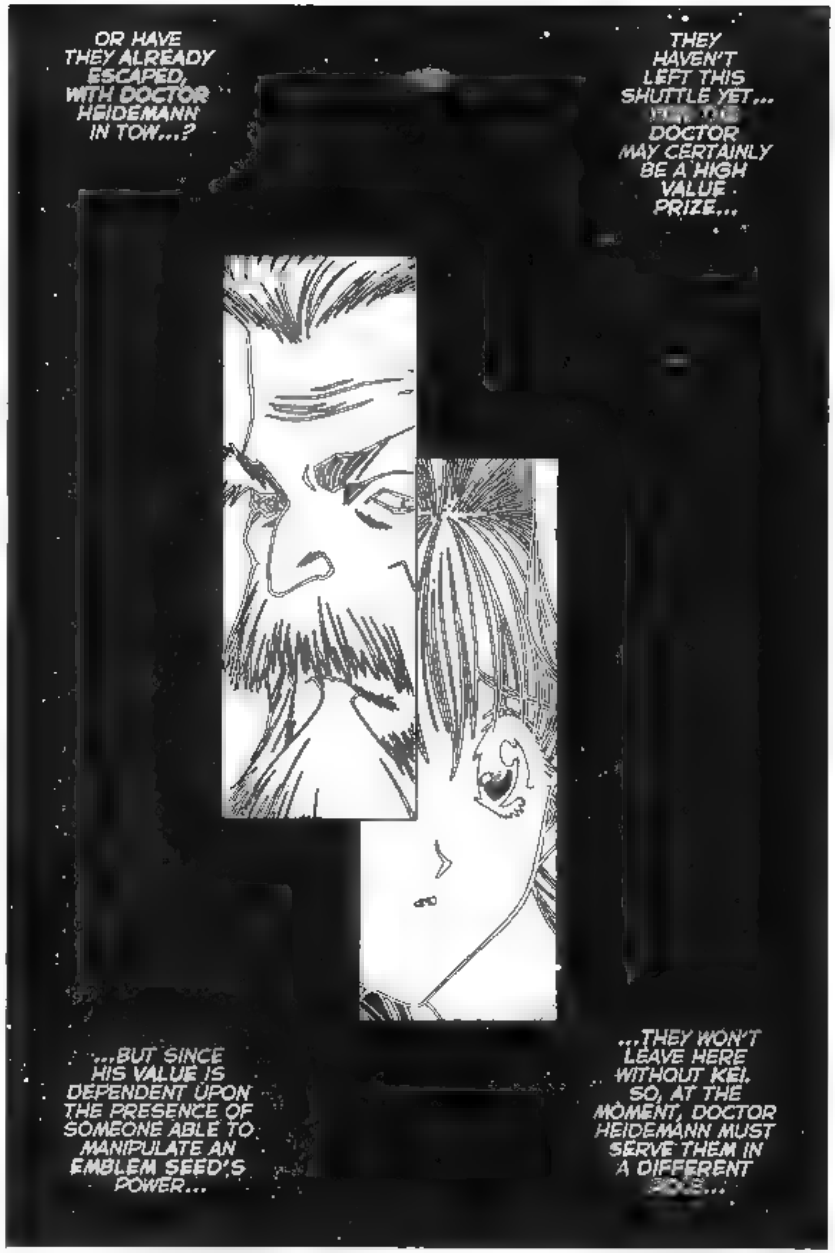
AH...



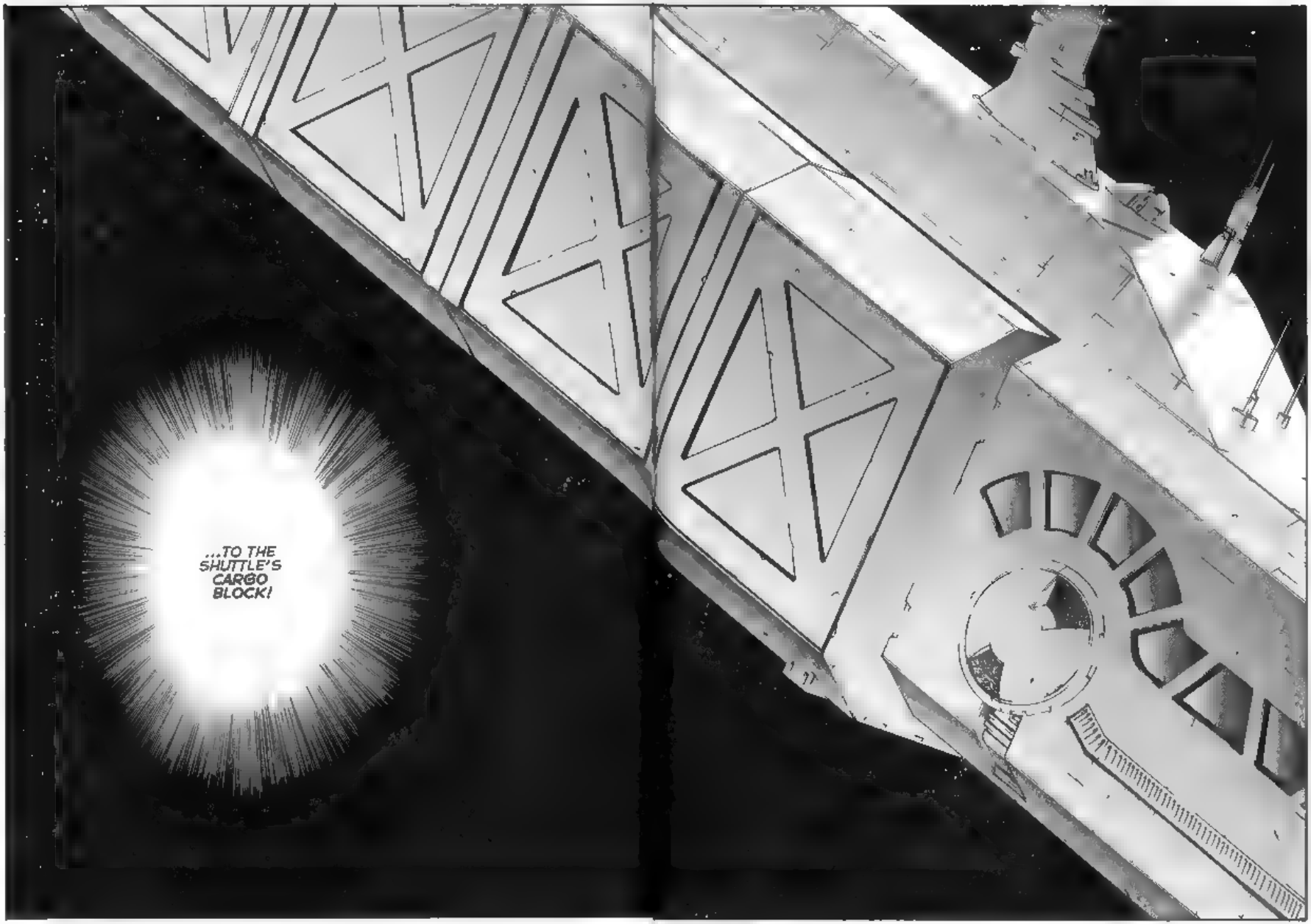
ACT 69

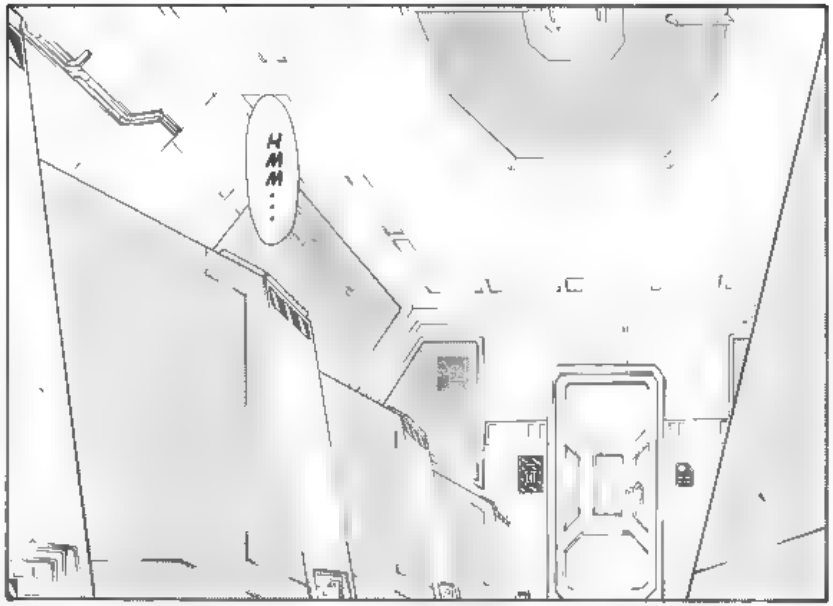

BEEP! BEEP!
THE ONLY LIFEBOAT LAUNCH AREA THAT I HADN'T ALREADY CHECKED.
DAMN! AND THIS WAS MY LAST OPPORTU-NITY.

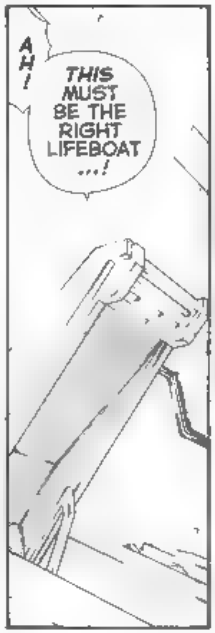
SO, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT OUR HIJACKER FRIENDS...
CHECKING
...HAVE LAUNCHED ALL OF THE LIFEBOATS...
ROTATE HANDLE TO OPEN LIFEBOAT HATCH
...EXCEPT FOR THAT LIFEBOAT, THE ONE THAT KEI'S POWERS ACCIDEN-TALLY DAMAGED.
BUT THAT'S ALMOST CERTAIN TO BE OF NO USE...!
WELL...IT WOULD SEEM THAT MY HOPES OF DISCOVERING A LIFEBOAT RESERVED FOR THE HIJACKERS HAVE BEEN DASHED.


OR HAVE THEY ALREADY ESCAPED, WITH DOCTOR HEIDEMANN IN TOW...?
THEY HAVEN'T LEFT THIS SHUTTLE YET... THE DOCTOR MAY CERTAINLY BE A HIGH VALUE PRIZE...
...BUT SINCE HIS VALUE IS DEPENDENT UPON THE PRESENCE OF SOMEONE ABLE TO MANIPULATE AN EMBLEM SEED'S POWER...
...THEY WON'T LEAVE HERE WITHOUT KEI. SO, AT THE MOMENT, DOCTOR HEIDEMANN MUST SERVE THEM IN A DIFFERENT ROLE...

...AND THAT ROLE IS BAIT!
AND FOR THE DOCTOR TO ACT AS A LURE FOR US...
...THAT DEFINITELY MEANS THAT HE'S STILL SOMEWHERE ON BOARD THIS SHUTTLE
SINCE THEY'VE JETTISONED ALL THE LIFEBOATS, THEY MUST HAVE AN ALTERNATE ESCAPE ROUTE PLANNED!!
WHETHER WE'RE TALKING ABOUT AN ESCAPE MINIPOD OR A VACUUM CAPSULE, WHERE COULD THEY STORE SOMETHING OF THAT SIZE...?
....?
OF COURSE ...!
WHERE ELSE COULD THEY HIDE A DEVICE THAT LARGE?
IT'S ALMOST TOO OBVIOUS, BUT THAT IS THE DIRECTION THAT GIZEH WAS LEADING KEI AND THE OTHERS...


...TO THE SHUTTLE'S CARGO BLOCK!


HMM...


AH!
THIS MUST BE THE RIGHT LIFEBOAT ...!

OOPS ...

UH, KEI ...?
YES ...?

COULD YOU PLEASE, AH, STAND GUARD OUT THERE...?
HAHH ...?

OH!!
UM, SURE, SUNAO ...

SO... WHERE COULD THAT MEDICAL KIT BE?
I'M SORRY, KEI!

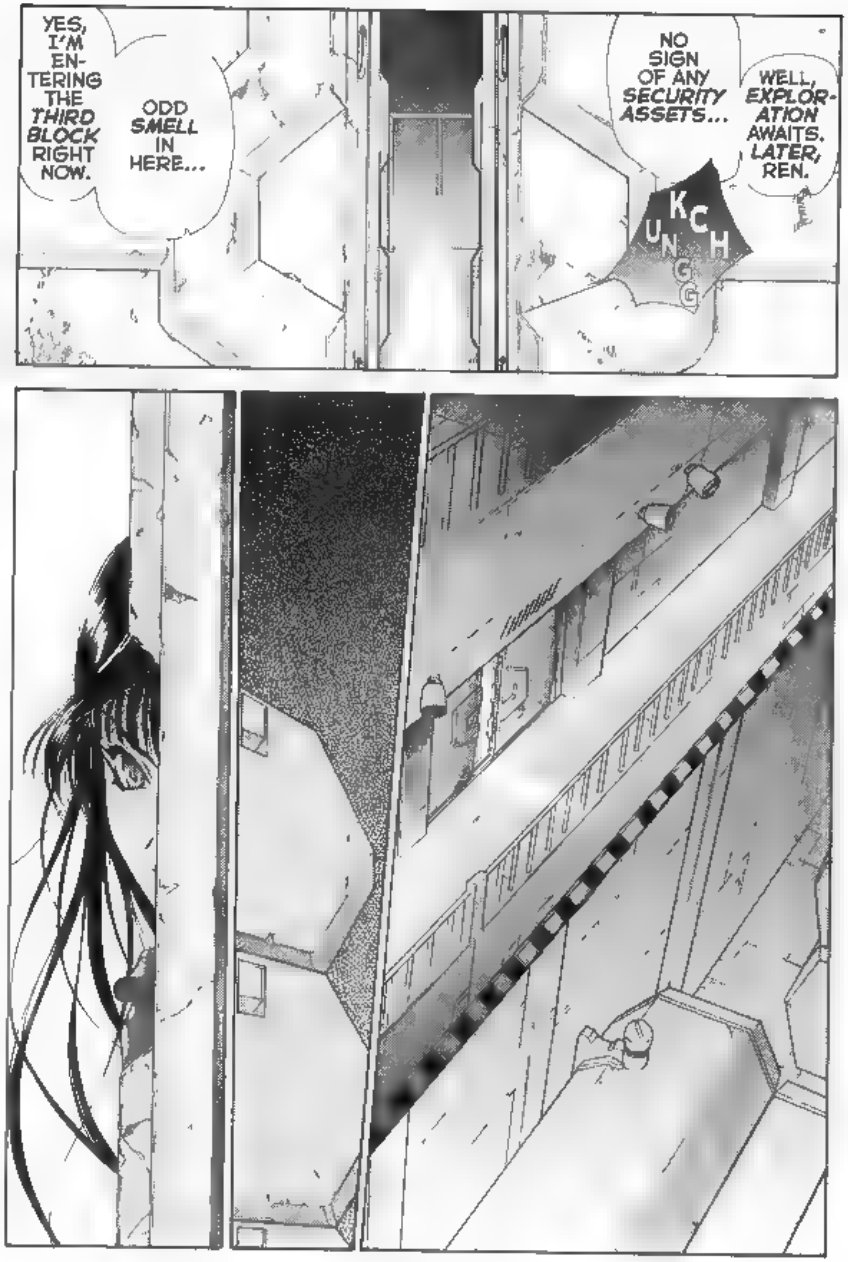
BUT IF YOU WERE TO COME INSIDE THIS LIFEBOAT WITH ME, AND YOUR POWERS WERE TO CAUSE ANOTHER ACCIDENT...
...SOMETHING AWFUL MIGHT HAPPEN TO US...! SORRY, KEI...
WELL, I CAN DEFINITELY UNDERSTAND WHY SUNAO WOULD BE WORRIED... THESE SILLY POWERS OF MINE...!
BUT IT'S SUCH A SHAME TO WASTE AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE ALONE TOGETHER...!

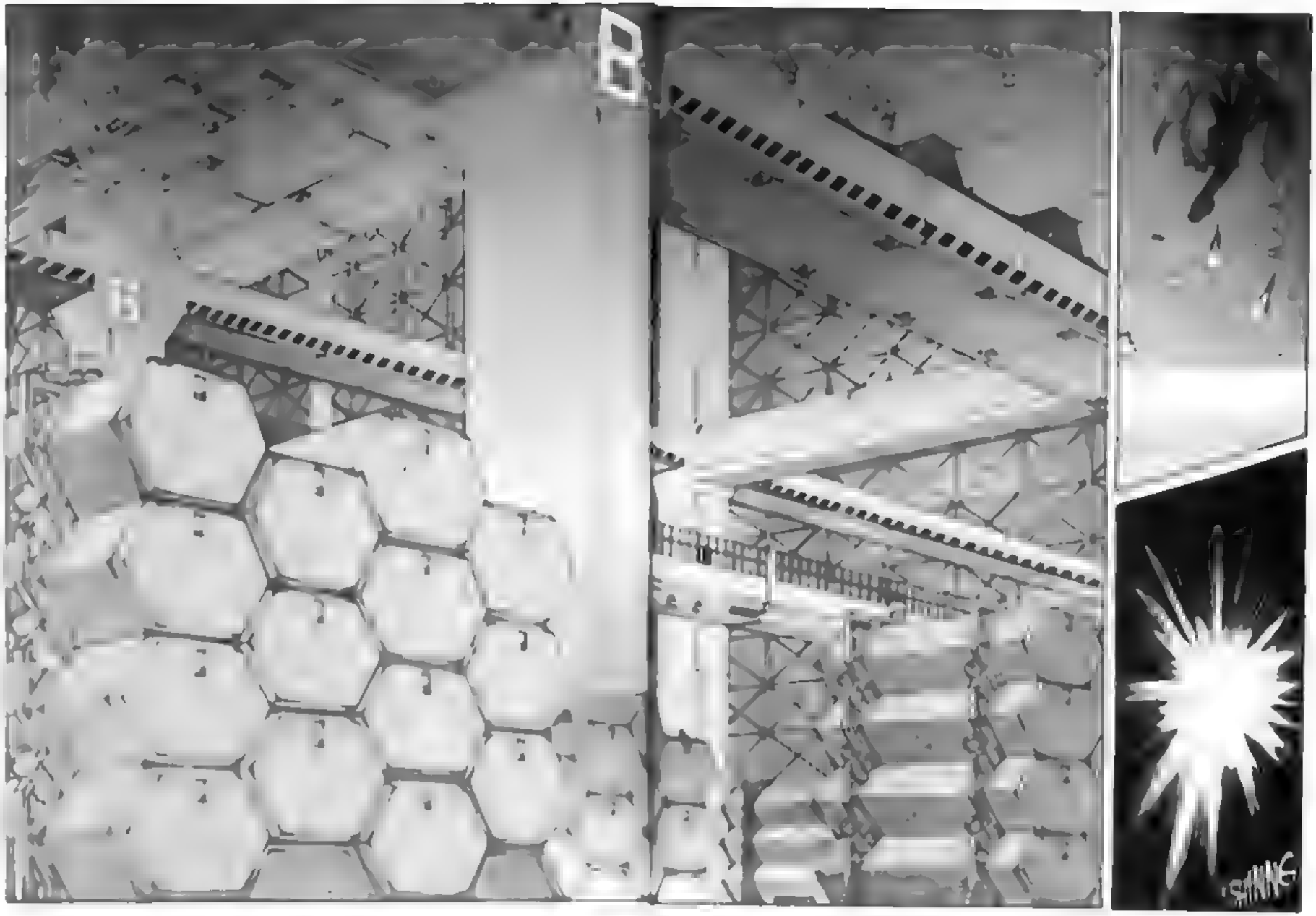
OH, NO!
EEEK!
WHAT AM I THINKING, AT A TIME LIKE THIS ...?
I'M SO NAUGHTY!
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE STANDING GUARD, HERE, S...LY...!
WHOOSH WHOOSH
SLAPP
SLAPP
OH!!
IS THIS... BLOOD ...?
MISS M-ZAK SAID THAT SHE FOUGHT SOMEBODY HERE, BUT SHE NEVER SAID HOW THE FIGHT ENDED! I WONDER...

...WHAT HAPPENED TO HER OPPONENT...?
KEI, I FOUND IT!
I HAVE THE MEDICAL KIT, NOW, SO WE CAN--
KEI??
WHERE ARE YOU ...?

ACT 70

KEEP OUT
I'M AWARE THAT WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME TO PERFORM THE COURSE CORRECTION, REN.
YES. YES. OKAY.
WELL, FOR THE TIME BEING, TRY TO USE THE LASER LINK TO CONTACT EARTH...
YES. DO THAT, REN.
IN THE MEANTIME, I'LL KEEP SEARCHING THE CARGO BLOCKS.
BUPP BUPP BREEP


YES, I'M ENTERING THE THIRD BLOCK RIGHT NOW.
ODD SMELL IN HERE...
NO SIGN OF ANY SECURITY ASSETS...
KCH UNGG
WELL, EXPLORATION AWAITS. LATER, REN.

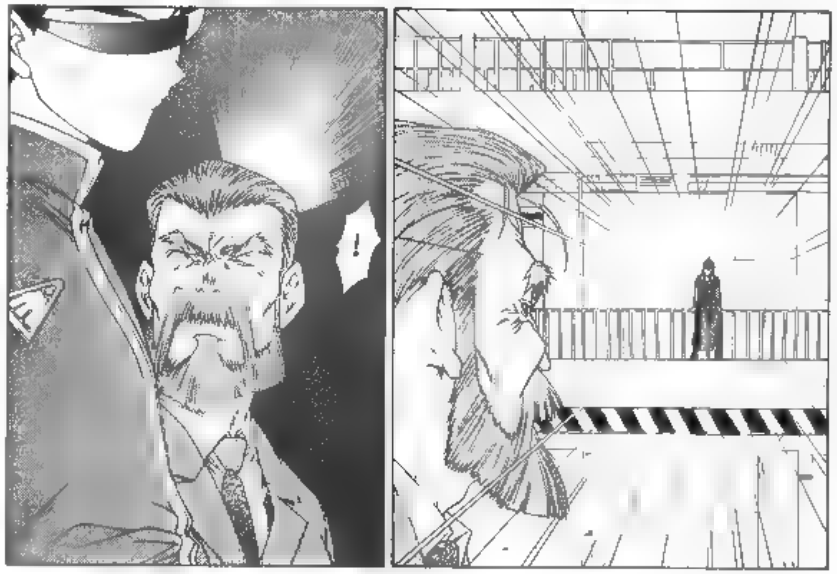


THMPP
I WAS EXPECT-ING YOU...
...MY DEAR ATTIM M-ZAK ...

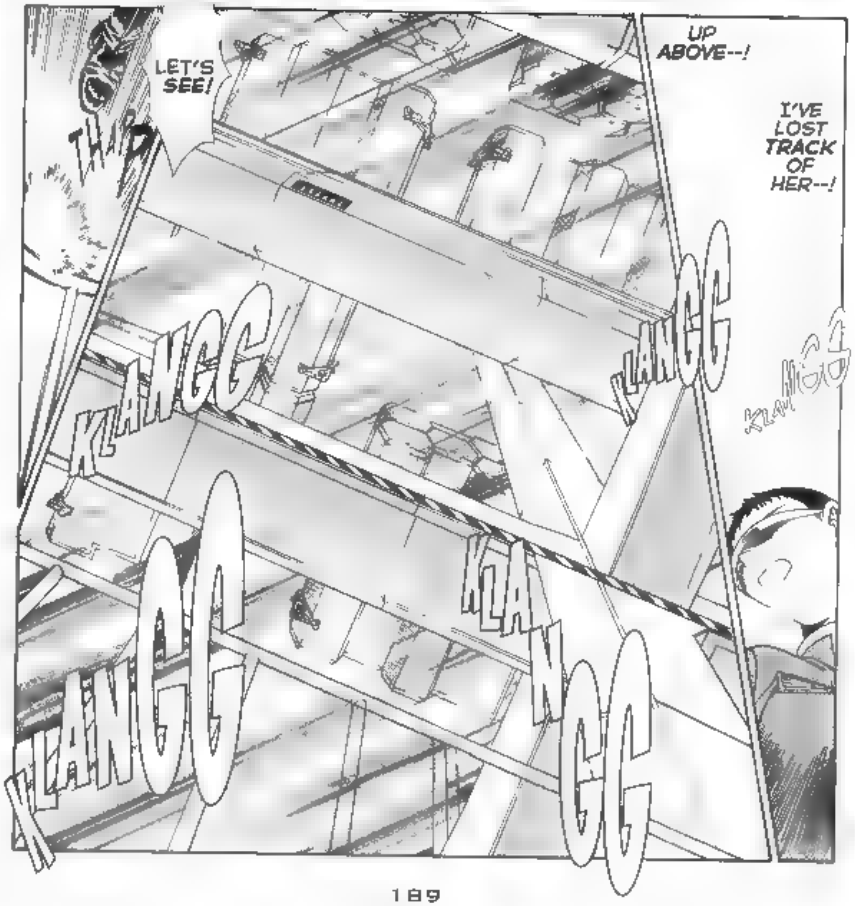
FSHTT
FSHTT
...EVEN THOUGH WE WERE HOPING TO SEE THE PRINCESS, NOT THE ANGEL.
HOW TERRIBLY DISAPPOINTING.
.....
ALMOST AS DISAP-POINTING AS YOUR ATTEMPT AT A DRAMATIC DELIVERY, I'M AFRAID...

HA!
YOU WOUND ME, MISS M-ZAK!
I HAD PLANNED TO GO WITH SOMETHING EVEN MORE MELO-DRAMATIC, BELIEVE IT OR NOT!
SUCH AS, "I'D RATHER KILL DOCTOR HEIDEMANN THAN LET YOU U.N. BASTARDS HAVE HIM!"

HMM... I WONDER, MIGHT YOU HAVE THE SAME THING IN MIND FOR THE GOOD DOCTOR?
LET ME GUESS... YOU'RE HERE TO KILL TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE, AREN'T YOU?


!

I SEE.
DESPITE YOUR THREAT, YOU ACTUALLY CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE THE DOCTOR, CAN YOU?


LET'S SEE!
UP ABOVE--!
I'VE LOST TRACK OF HER--!
KLANGG
KLANGG
KLANGG
KLANGG

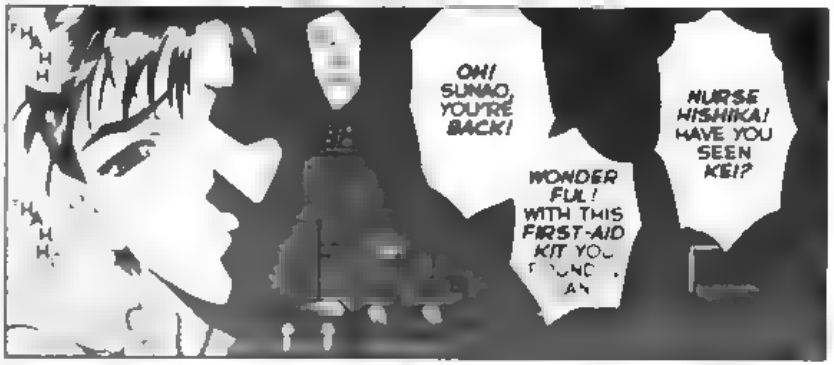
FWOOSH
AH! THERE YOU ARE!
!
TOO EASY... HE'S UP TO SOME-THING!
WHSHH
WHSHINGG

VWIPP
FWAPP
HOOSH
...OSH
SPAK SPAK
KRAAM
!!

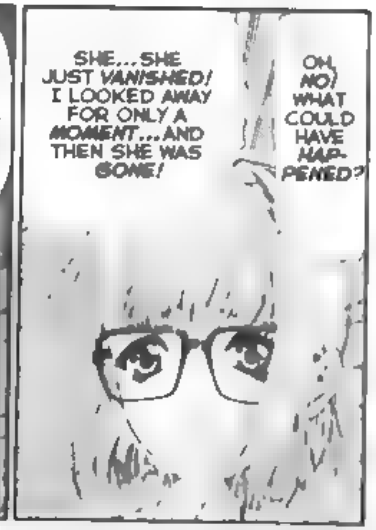
VREEE
KCHAK
WHAT?!
ANTI-PERSONNEL SMART DRONES AGAIN--?
VREEE
VRB
SHANGG
SHANGG
I BELIEVE YOU'VE PLAYED WITH THESE FELLOWS BEFORE, HAVEN'T YOU?
WELL, THESE MODELS ARE CONSIDERABLY NEW AND IMPROVED, AS YOU'LL SOON FIND...

ACT 71

THPP
THPP
THPP
KEI!


HAHH
HAHH
OH! SUNAO, YOU'RE BACK!
WONDER FUL! WITH THIS FIRST-AID KIT YOU
AN
NURSE HISHIKA! HAVE YOU SEEN KEI?

HASN'T SHE COME BACK HERE YET?
UM NO
WAS THERE TROU-BLE?

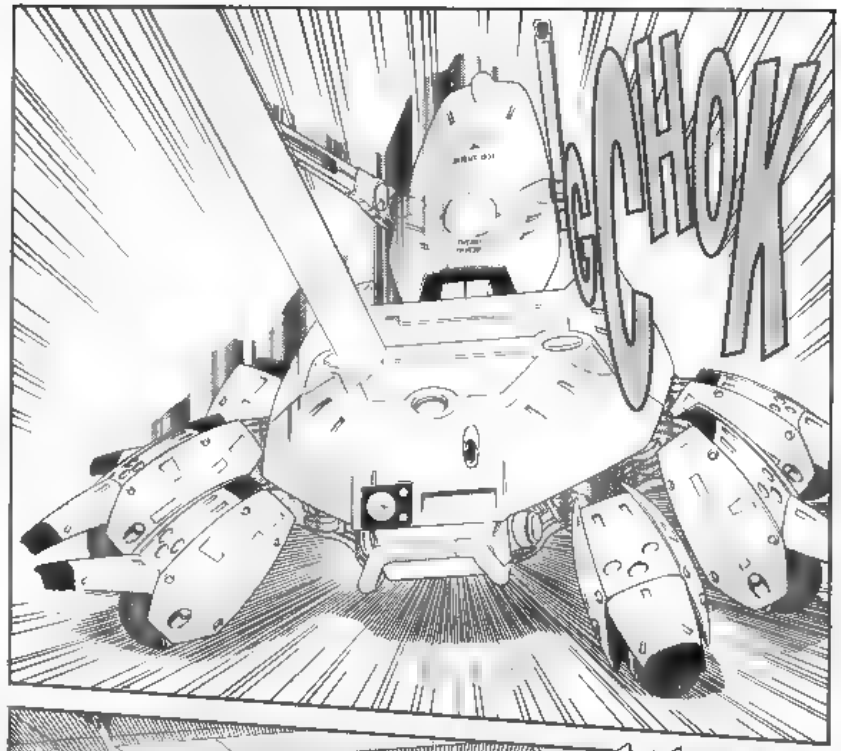

SHE... SHE JUST VANISHED! I LOOKED AWAY FOR ONLY A MOMENT... AND THEN SHE WAS GONE!
OH, NO! WHAT COULD HAVE HAP-PENED?

SHE'S DISAP-PEARED
DOCTOR HEIDE MANN

DAMN IT!
DAMN IT!
I NEVER SHOULD'VE LET HER COME WITH ME...!

KEI... WHERE COULD YOU HAVE GONE...?
NNGK
WHAT IS THIS...? IS SOMEONE PSYCHICALLY CALLING ME?
KEI--?!
NO...IT'S NOT KEI!

SOMEHOW, THOUGH...I HAVE FELT THIS PRESENCE BEFORE...
BUT WHEN...? WHERE...?


CHOK

WHKOOM
WHKOOM

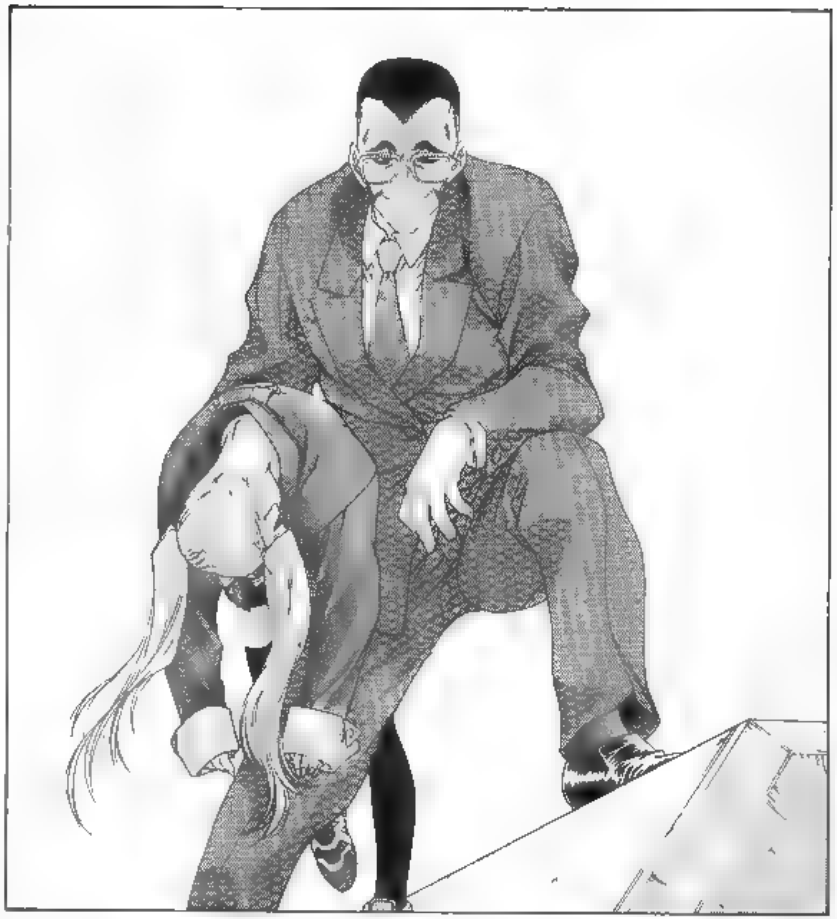
SHING

BKOOM
BKOOM
BKOOM
THIS... THIS IS INCONCEIV-ABLE ...!

THIS IS BEYOND BELIEF, EVEN FOR THE LEGENDARY "CRIMSON ANGEL"...!
HOW COULD SHE POSSIBLY DESTROY SO MANY SMART DRONES IN SO LITTLE TIME...?
"HOIST BY HIS OWN PETARD" ...
THNK
ISN'T THAT HOW THE OLD PHRASE GOES?
FOR, DEAR GIZEH, AS YOU'LL SEE...
SHMPP
...I DIS-ABLED YOUR LITTLE TOYS...
...WITH YOUR OWN HARD-WARE!
WHAT? THE SIGNAL SCRAM-BLER--?!

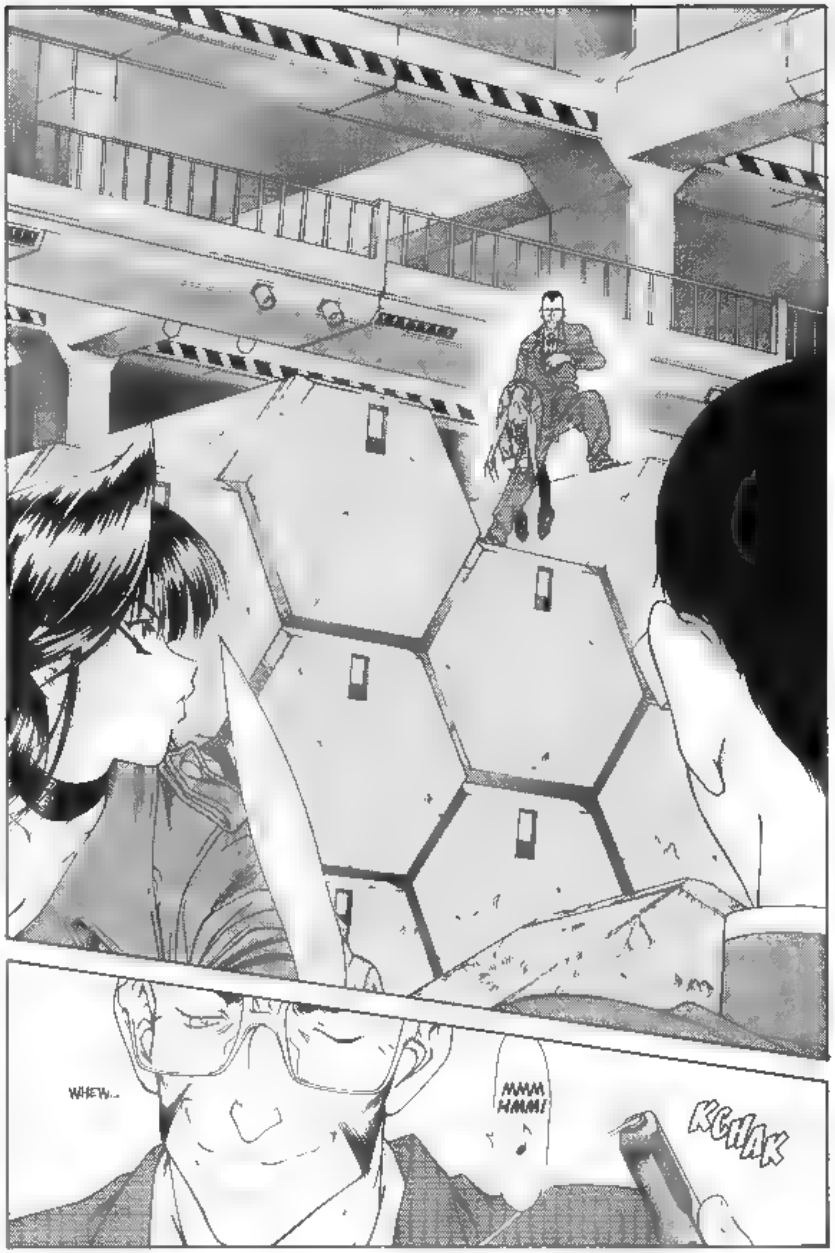
WE REWIRED THE SCRAMBLER TO TRANSMIT ON YOUR SMART DRONES' COMMAND FREQUENCY, AND PARALYZE THEIR ATTACK SYSTEMS FOR A FEW SECONDS...
...BUT A FEW SECONDS' PARALYSIS WAS ALL THE OPENING I NEEDED.
DOCTOR HEIDEMANN, IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO REJOIN THE FOLD. PLEASE... COME WITH ME.
.....
BREEEP
!
YOU WERE ASKING ABOUT GIZEH? WELL, HE'S RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME...

WHAT? THE COURSE CORRECTION?
I'LL DEAL WITH THAT RIGHT NOW.
GIZEH.
KLAK
YOU HAVE THE MISSING NAVIGATION DISK! HAND IT OVER LIKE A GOOD BOY, WON'T YOU?
THE NAVIGATION DISK? HOW VERY REGRETTABLE, MISS M-ZAK... I'M AFRAID I DON'T HAVE IT.
GIZEH! YOU WON'T GAIN ANY TIME BY LYING, YOU--
HE AIN'T LYIN', HONEY.
?!
FWOOOSH



WELL, LOOKY HERE, SWEETIE...
...ISN'T THIS THE L'L OL' DISK YOU WERE LOOKING FOR?

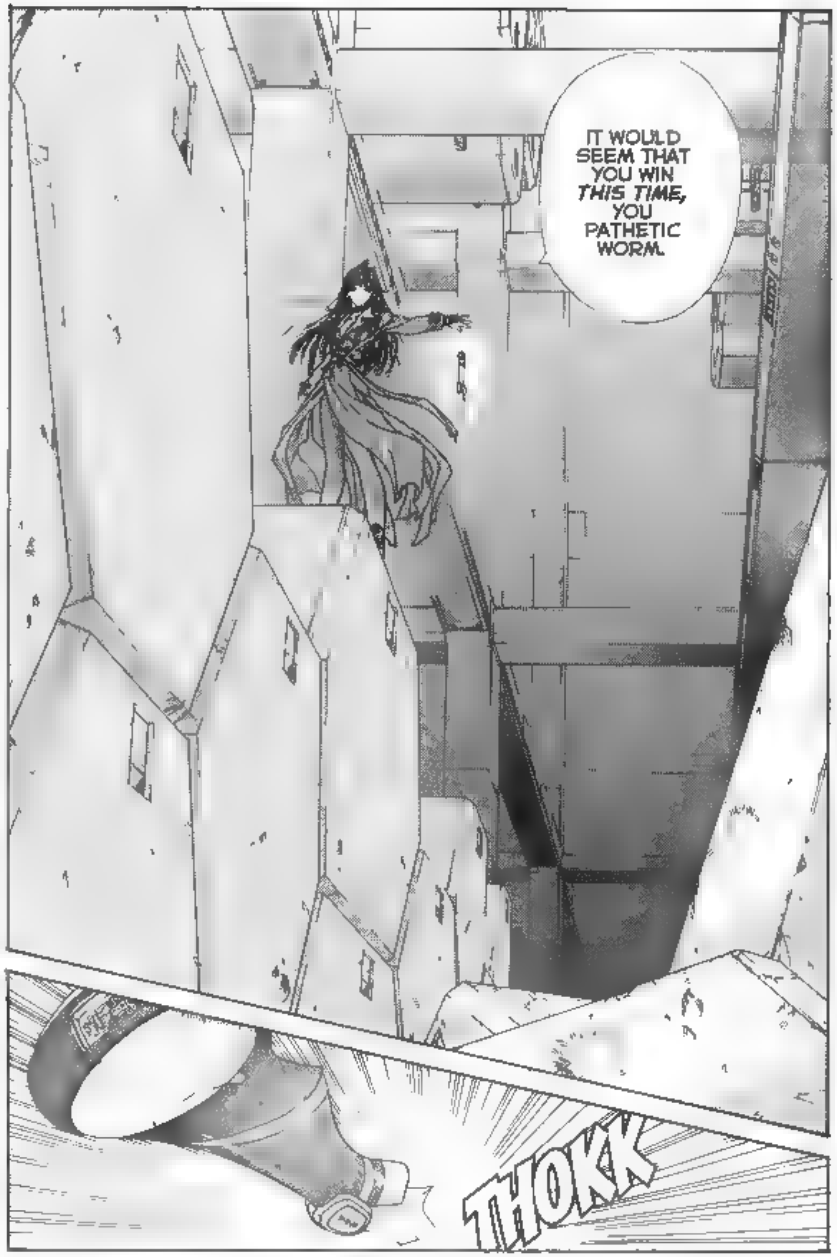
Act 72


WHEW...
MMM HMM!
KCHAK

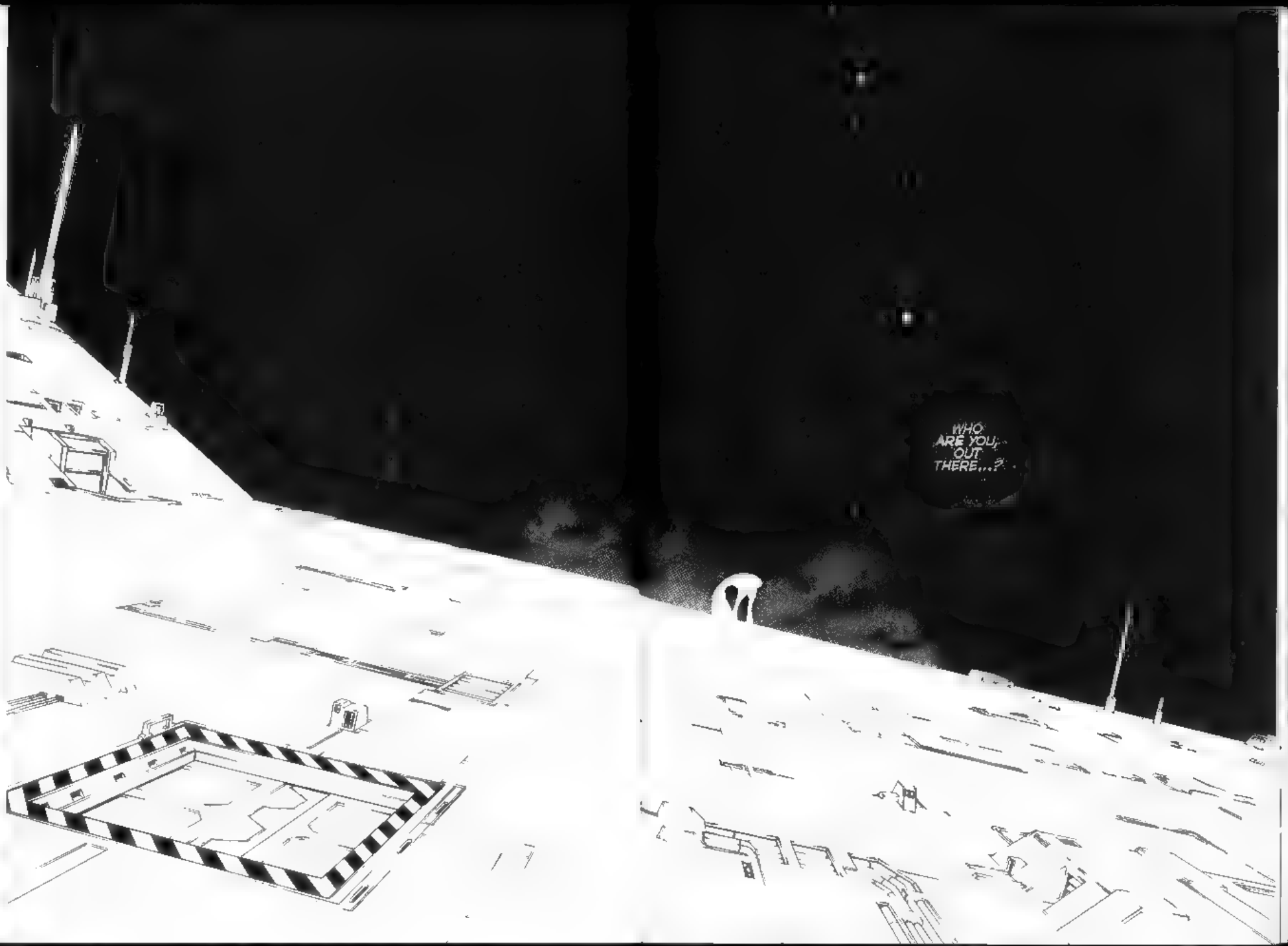
YOU...? BUT HOW...?
SURPRISED? ARE YOU SURPRISED? YOU MUST BE SURPRISED! YOU ARE, AREN'T YA?
THE HOLY GUARDIAN ANGEL THOUGHT THAT SHE'D TRANSMIGRATED ME TO HEAVEN...
BUGGUT?
NO.
SORRY TO DIS-APPOINT YA, OKAY?

NOW, I ALMOST FEEL BAD ABOUT THIS...
...HAVING TO USE THE TIRED OL' "DROP YOUR WEAPON OR THE HOSTAGE GETS IT" GAMBIT...
...BUT, HEY, WHAT CAN I SAY?
CALL ME RETRO...

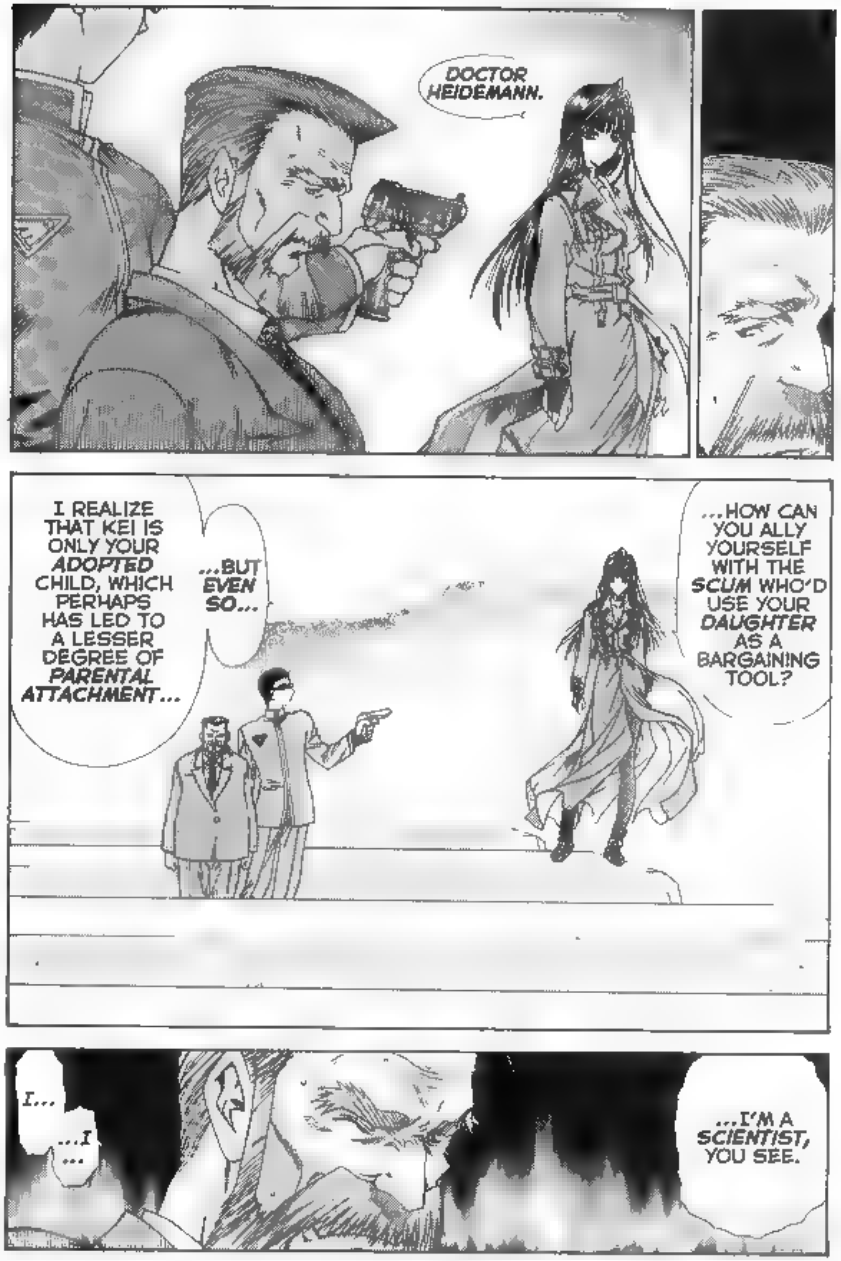
...BUT I GOTTA GO WITH WHAT WORKS!
RIGHT??
WHSHH
UNDER-STOOD.


IT WOULD SEEM THAT YOU WIN *THIS TIME,* YOU PATHETIC WORM.
THOKK

OH, MY... MORE *FULSOME PRAISE!* I'M *SO VERY* HONORED!
STILL...
...YOU WOULDN'T WANT ME TO *MESS UP* THIS ADORABLE LI'L FACE, WOULD YA?
GOTTA *HURRY!*
SOMEONE'S CALLING TO ME, SOMEHOW...


WHO ARE YOU, OUT THERE...?

WELL, TELL ME ONE THING... HOW CAN YOU STILL BE STANDING HERE?
DO YOUR MYSTERIOUS AUGMENTATIONS INCLUDE IMMORTALITY...?
"IMMORTALITY," HUH?
HEH, HEH...
INDEED, EXTREME VITALITY DOES HAPPEN TO BE ONE OF MY CHARMS, BUT I'M NOT EXACTLY IMMORTAL, Y'KNOW. I JUST HAVE MASSIVELY REDUNDANT LIFE-SUPPORT SYSTEMS...
...THOUGH IT DOES TAKE 'EM A WHILE TO KICK IN, YOU MIGHT'VE NOTICED.
AH, I SEE...!
HE'S TELLING ME HIS SECRETS, WHICH MEANS THEY'RE DEFINITELY PLANNING TO KILL ME...


DOCTOR HEIDEMANN.
I REALIZE THAT KEI IS ONLY YOUR ADOPTED CHILD, WHICH PERHAPS HAS LED TO A LESSER DEGREE OF PARENTAL ATTACHMENT...
...BUT EVEN SO...
...HOW CAN YOU ALLY YOURSELF WITH THE SCUM WHO'D USE YOUR DAUGHTER AS A BARGAINING TOOL?
I...
...I
...
...I'M A SCIENTIST, YOU SEE.

YES! A SCIENTIST, DAMMIT!!
EVERYTHING ELSE PALES BEFORE THE REQUIREMENTS OF RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY!
I'M DRIVEN TO DIG DEEPER THAN ANYONE ELSE!
TO FIND ANSWERS BEFORE ANYONE ELSE!
TO ACCOMPLISH MY WORK, I'D SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DEVIL HIMSELF!

AND IF THE U.N. NOW DEEMS ME EXPENDABLE...
...WHAT IS LEFT TO STOP ME?!

VON BRAUN, WHO SENT THE FIRST MAN TO THE MOON, SPENT HIS EARLY CAREER SPEARHEADING THE RESEARCH EFFORT FOR NAZI GERMANY'S V-2 PROGRAM!
EINSTEIN AND OPPENHEIMER... SURELY THEY MUST HAVE REALIZED HOW MUCH TERROR THAT THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS THEY HELPED CREATE WOULD INFLICT ON THE HUMAN RACE!

KNOWING THAT THOUSANDS, EVEN MILLIONS WOULD DIE BECAUSE OF THEIR WORK... WHY DID THESE MEN OF SCIENCE STAY IN THEIR LABORATORIES?
BECAUSE THAT WAS WHERE THEY COULD DEVOTE THEIR LIVES TO RESEARCH!
HAHA HAHA

Act 73

TO ONE DEGREE OR ANOTHER, *ALL* SCIENTISTS ARE *SOLIPSISTICALLY EGOISTICAL...*
SPLENDID RESOLVE! YOU'RE A *PARAGON* OF SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY, DOCTOR...
...WELL WORTHY OF JOINING OUR RANKS.
NOW, I'M AFRAID, WE MUST *END* THIS "Q&A SESSION."
IT'S TIME FOR US TO *BID YOU ADIEU,* MISS M-ZAK!

SEE YOU IN HEAVEN...
GOODBYE, CRIMSON ANGEL.

KCHAK
KCHAK
SCEEP
FSHOOM

FWSH
FWOOOSH
THAPP
WHAT?!
BLAMM
BLAMM
DAMN!
BLAMM

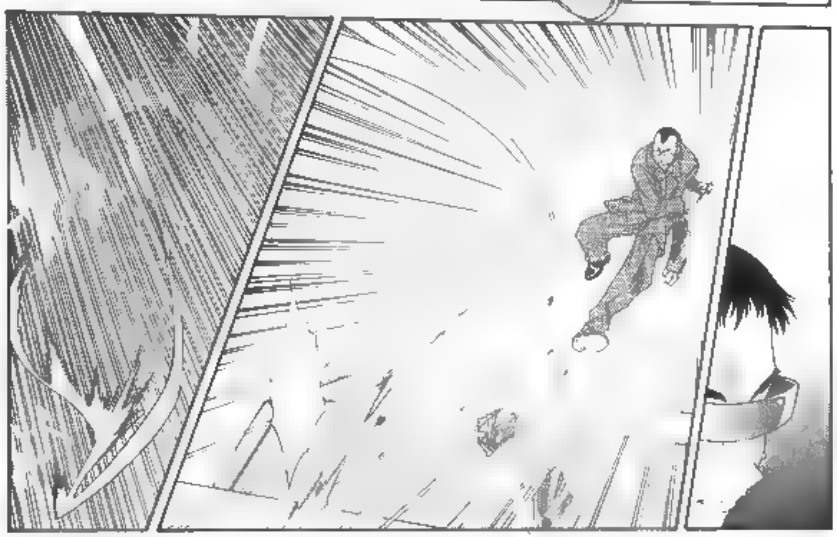
SPANGG
SPANGG
SPANGG
SPANG
WHSH
I'LL NAIL HER THE MOMENT SHE LANDS!
GOT YOU THIS TIME, BITCH!

CHOK
SHLUKK
SPLSHH
SPAK
NGAAA

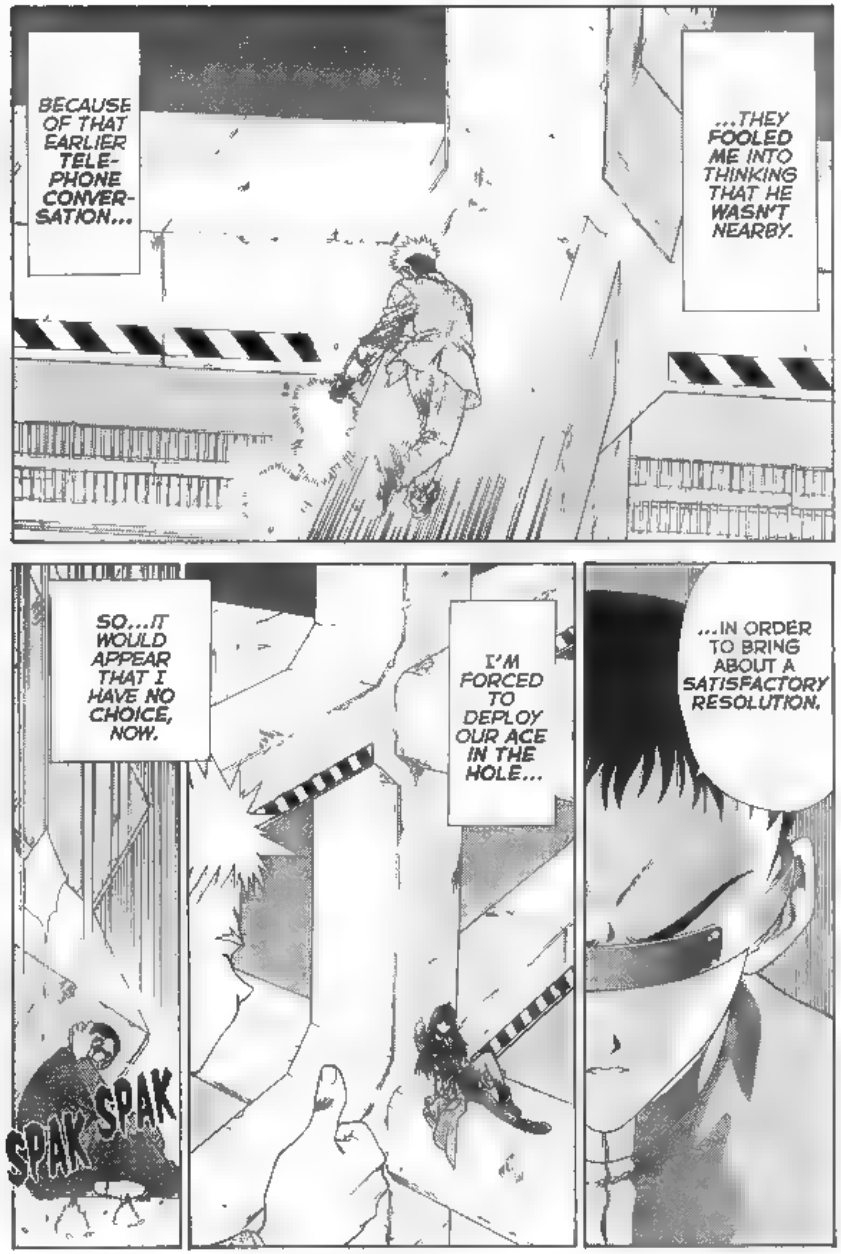
STRAY?!
LOOK OUT, DOCTOR!
WHSHH
SPAK
SPAK
SPAK
SPAK

GOOD LORD... THOSE BULLETS ...
...THEY STRUCK WHERE I WAS JUST STAND-ING!

SO...
..IT SEEMS THAT I'VE TRULY BECOME A CRIMINAL, IN THE U.N.'S EYES...
DOCTOR! PLEASE, GET OUT OF THE LINE OF FIRE, BEHIND THE CARGO CONTAINERS!
STRAY! SECURE THE GIRL!



THAT GUNFIRE CAUGHT ME OFF GUARD!
ANOTHER SURPRISE COURTESY OF THE REMARKABLE "REN," IT WOULD APPEAR!
KCHAK

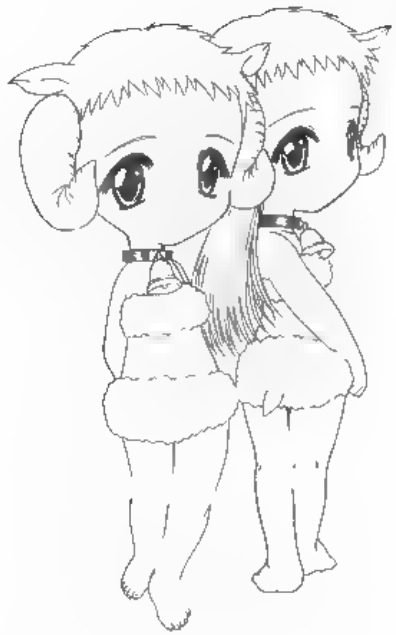

BECAUSE OF THAT EARLIER TELE-PHONE CONVER-SATION...
...THEY FOOLED ME INTO THINKING THAT HE WASN'T NEARBY.
SO...IT WOULD APPEAR THAT I HAVE NO CHOICE, NOW.
I'M FORCED TO DEPLOY OUR ACE IN THE HOLE...
...IN ORDER TO BRING ABOUT A SATISFACTORY RESOLUTION.
SPAK SPAK

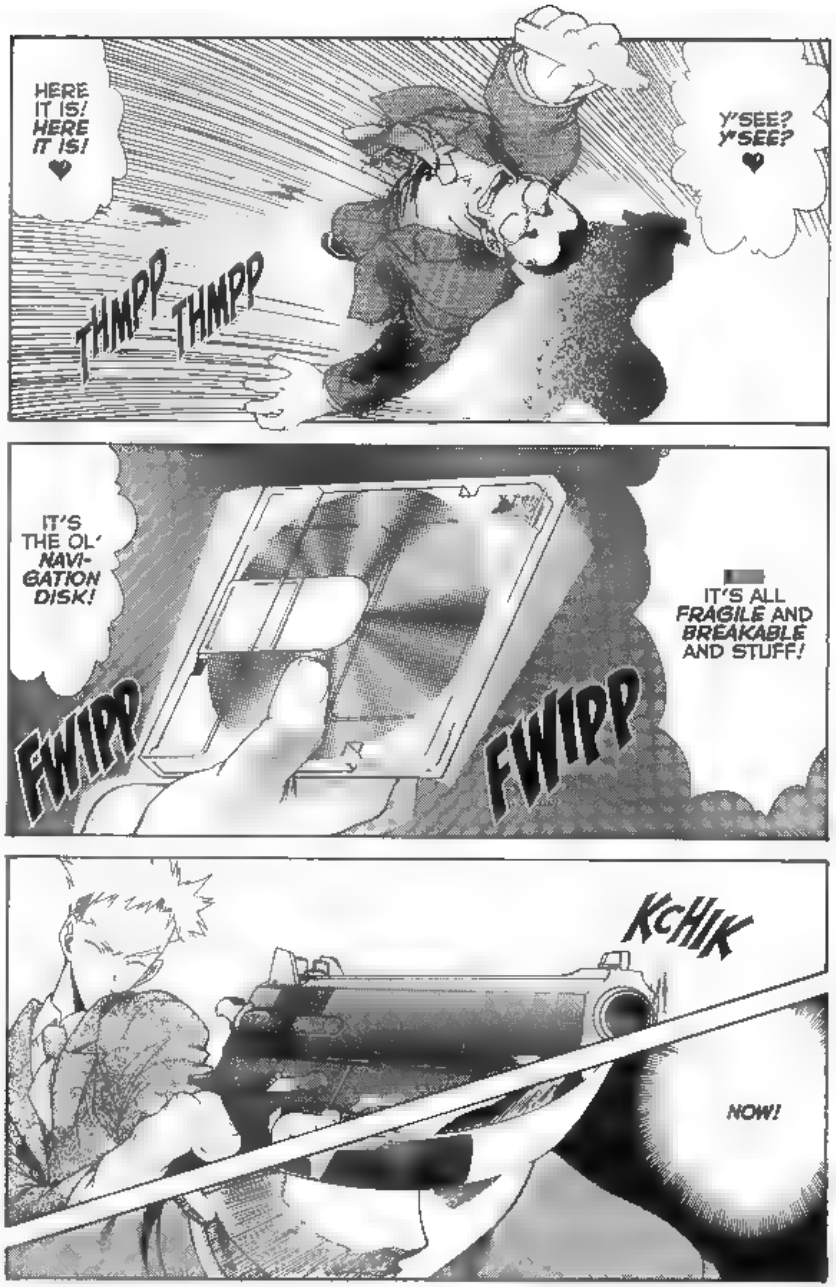
PLEASE LISTEN, DOCTOR. ESCAPE EQUIPMENT IS HIDDEN INSIDE THAT LARGE CONTAINER IN FRONT OF US.
YOU MUST GET INSIDE IT, WHILE STRAY AND I DISTRACT OUR ENEMIES.
DAMN...
DAMN!
THEY RUINED MY NICE SUIT!
THUNK

YOU WANT ME TO DISTRACT THOSE ORNERY FOLKS UP THERE?
SHLIPP
DAMN, BUT A BUSINESSMAN'S LIFE IS FULLA STRUGGLES. MY ARM HASN'T EVEN FINISHED REGENERATING YET!
SHLIPP SHLIPP
HERE WE GO...
SHMPP
YO! HELLO UP THERE, SNIPER BOY!
HUH?!
KRAKK
HRAAA!
KRAKKK
GYEEK!
SPAT SPAT
HEY, HEY! YOU SURE YOU WANNA BE BLAZING AWAY AT ME LIKE THAT?
WHY, YOU MIGHT DAMAGE THIS, Y'KNOW!

YOUR ONLY HOPE TO CORRECT THIS SHUTTLE'S KAMIKAZE COURSE...
...THE OH-SO-PRECIOUS NAVIGATION DISK!
:NNH:
:HAHH:

Act 73



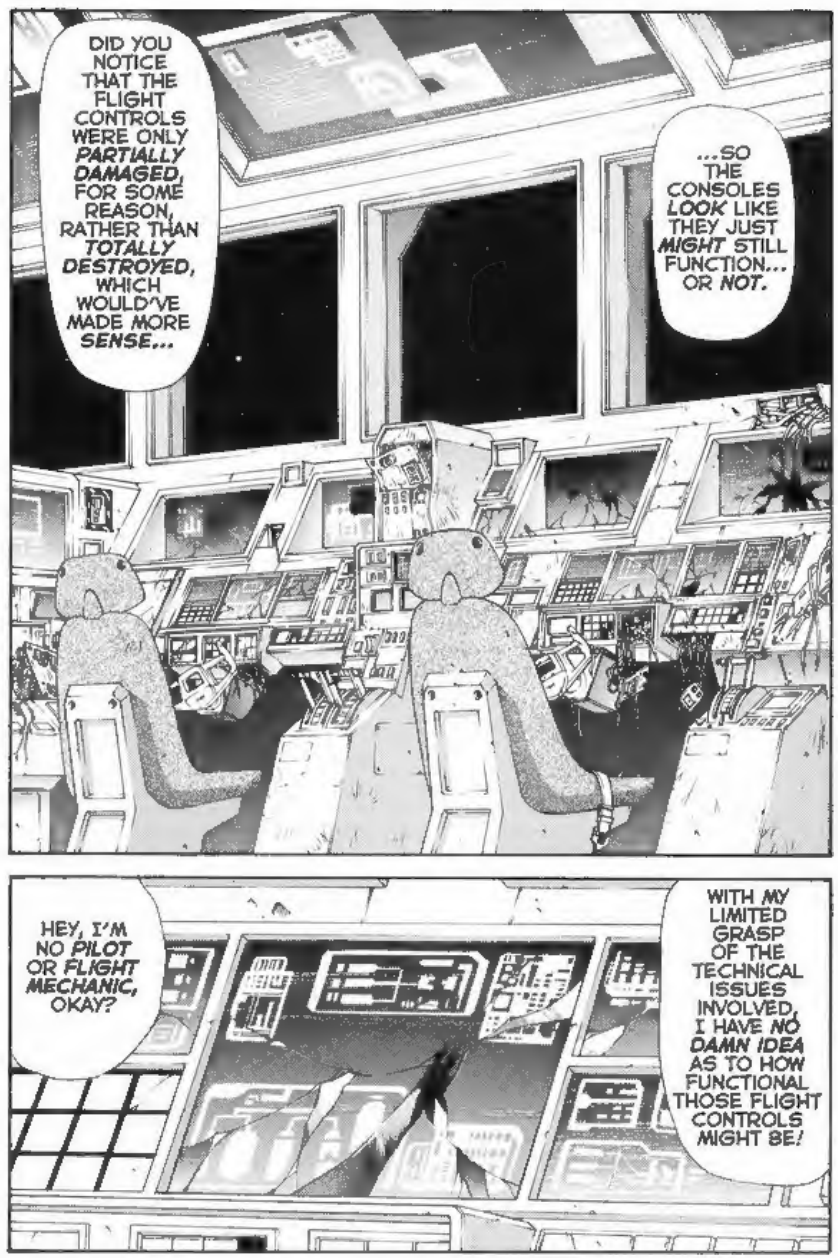

HERE IT IS! HERE IT IS!
Y'SEE? Y'SEE?
THMPP THMPP
IT'S THE OL' NAVI-GATION DISK!
IT'S ALL FRAGILE AND BREAKABLE AND STUFF!
FWIPP
FWIPP
KCHIK
NOW!

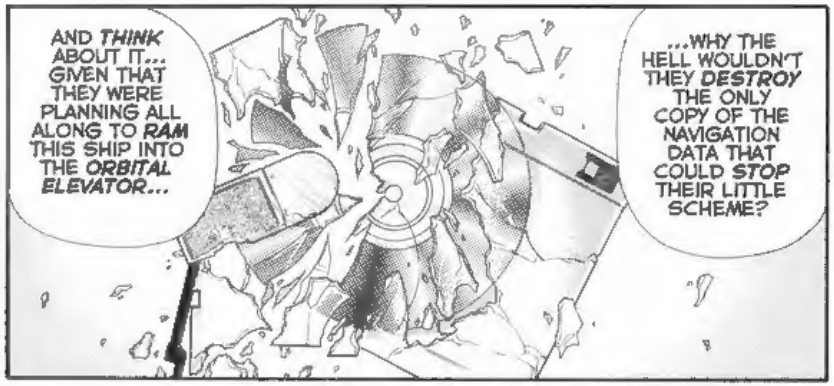
TMPP
TMPP
TMPP
SPAK
SPAK
GAAH
RAKK
RAKK
WHOOSH

SHRRKK
"NNGH"
"HGKK"
KOFF
KRSH
THOUGHT I'D FOUND A BLIND SPOT, BUT NO...!
YEESH!
THIS "REN" GENTLEMAN... HE'S CLEARLY NOT TO BE UNDER-ESTIMATED!
DAMN! YOU GOTTA STOP RUNNING AROUND LIKE THAT, OKAY?

HOLD YOUR FIRE, REN!
I'LL TAKE CARE OF--
NO!
I'LL HEAD OFF AFTER THE DISK!
YOU GO AND RECOVER THE GIRL!
FSHINGG
KRAKK
KRAKK
BUT--
HEY, I'M LOUSY WITH KIDS, ALL RIGHT?
TMPP TMPP TMPP
BESIDES, D'YOU ACTUALLY THINK THAT BRAT WILL LISTEN TO WHAT I SAY?
WELL...
BESIDES...
...WE MIGHT JUST FIND OUT THAT THE DISK IS USELESS.
WHAAAT?!

WHAT THE HELL DO YOU MEAN BY *THAT*, REN?
WE DIDN'T FIND A *SINGLE* CREW MEMBER STILL AT HIS STATION ON THE *BRIDGE*, REMEMBER?
THEY WERE *ALL* LEFT SPRAWLED AND COMATOSE IN THE CORNER, LIKE PUPPETS WITH THEIR *STRINGS* CUT.
THEY'RE STILL ALIVE, BUT THEY *WON'T* WAKE UP... AND WHAT ABOUT THE DAMN *CONSOLES?*


DID YOU NOTICE THAT THE FLIGHT CONTROLS WERE ONLY *PARTIALLY DAMAGED*, FOR SOME REASON, RATHER THAN *TOTALLY DESTROYED*, WHICH WOULD'VE MADE MORE *SENSE*...
...SO THE CONSOLES *LOOK* LIKE THEY JUST *MIGHT* STILL FUNCTION... OR *NOT*.
HEY, I'M NO *PILOT* OR *FLIGHT MECHANIC*, OKAY?
WITH MY LIMITED GRASP OF THE TECHNICAL ISSUES INVOLVED, I HAVE *NO DAMN IDEA* AS TO HOW FUNCTIONAL THOSE FLIGHT CONTROLS MIGHT BE!


AND THINK ABOUT IT... GIVEN THAT THEY WERE PLANNING ALL ALONG TO RAM THIS SHIP INTO THE ORBITAL ELEVATOR...
...WHY THE HELL WOULDN'T THEY DESTROY THE ONLY COPY OF THE NAVIGATION DATA THAT COULD STOP THEIR LITTLE SCHEME?

"NAHH, I'M FAIRLY SURE THAT THE NAVIGATION DISK IS JUST A PROP...
KE!!
"...A TOOL FOR NEGOTIATING WITH US... OR FOR DISTRACTING US..."

:NNN:...
SPLIPP
OWW!

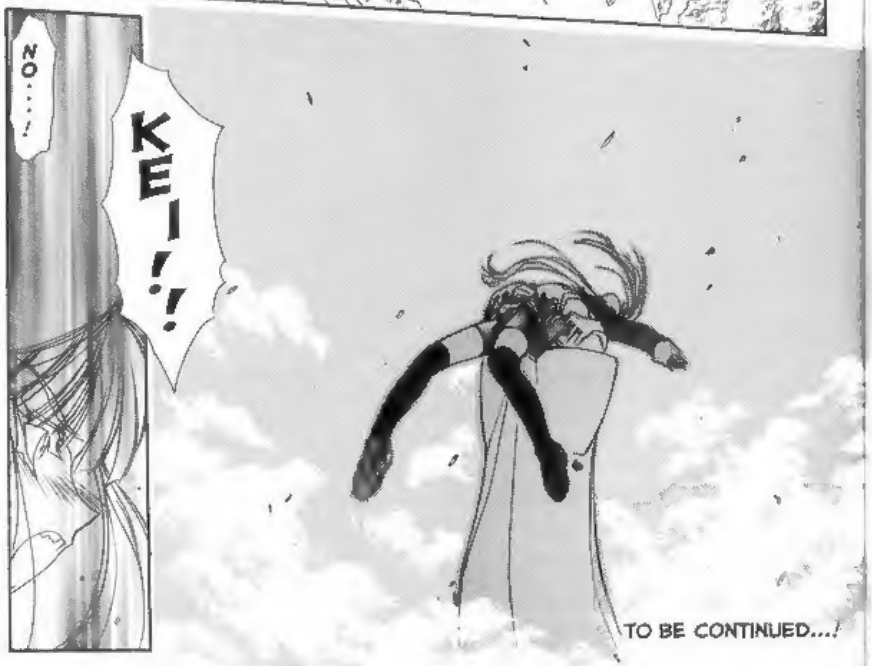
.....
BLOOD.

BLOOD?!
OH, NO! DID I HURT MYSELF SOMEWHERE?

FWAPP
?!
WAPP

THOOM
EEK!
KTHOOM
SKRANGG
SHRAKK

WH...
...WHAT?
KLANGG
KSHANGG



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